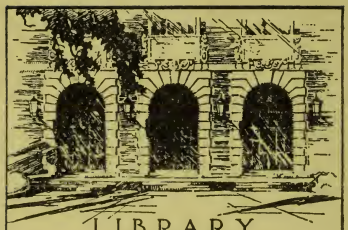
THE WISDOM OF THE WISE

JOHN OLIVER HOBBES



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The Wisdom of the Wise

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The Wisdom of the Wise

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

MRS. CRAIGIE

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1901

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NOTE

The construction of this comedy rests, it will be seen, on strictly traditional lines. In Act I. the various characters are introduced, their several points of view made clear, and the wheels of the slight—designedly slight—plot are set in motion. In Act II. we have what is known as the nouement, and in the third act, the dénouement. The author's aim was to present, as it were, a little diagram of mischief-making and mischief-makers. It would have been easier to have drawn the sketch in stronger colours, but the result might have been more painful than amusing—a tragedy, not a comedy at all. This being the case, it is hoped that those who prefer to be entertained rather than saddened by fiction will find themselves in sympathy with *Georgina* suffering under advice, and encouraged by the inevitable disagreements of her advisers.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE DUKE OF ST. ASAPH	*Mr. George Alexander.*
LORD APPLEFORD, F.S.A.	*Mr. H. B. Irving.*
MR. TOMMIE BISTERN	*Mr. Wilfred Draycott.*
MR. RALPH WUTHERING	*Mr. Arthur Elwood.*
MR. DE LISLE BRADGERS, M.P. ...	*Mr. H. H. Vincent.*
MR. BERTRAM ROMNEY, cousin of the Duchess	*Mr. A. E. Matthews.*
SERVANTS	*Mr. R. E. Goddard.* *Mr. W. Williams.*
THE DUCHESS OF ST. ASAPH... ...	*Miss Fay Davis.*
MRS. RALPH WUTHERING, MRS. TOMMIE BISTERN — cousins of the Duchess	*Miss Granville.* *Miss Margaret Halstan.*
MISS AMABEL EAST, an heiress ...	*Miss Julie Opp.*
LADY CHALE, aunt of the Duchess ...	*Mrs. Kemmis.*
MRS. LUPTON MILLES, MRS. LYNTON — aunts of Miss East	*Miss M. Talbot.* *Miss Henrietta Cowen.*
JOYNBEE	*Mrs. Campbell Bradley.*
PENNINGTON	*Miss Leila Repton.*

[*First produced at the St. James's Theatre, on Thursday November* 22, 1900.]

ACT I.—SCENE: *The Pink Saloon at Chale House, Piccadilly. A few minutes elapse.*

ACT II.—SCENE: *The Blue Saloon at Chale House.*

ACT III.—SCENE: *The Louis Seize suite at the Cosmopolitan Hotel. The same night.*

The Wisdom of the Wise

ACT I

SCENE : *The Pink Saloon at Chale House, Piccadilly.* TIME : *After dinner. an evening in June. The Blue Saloon can be seen beyond. Card-tables are arranged at the side of the stage. The windows are open, but the lights are lit. Outside it is clear moonlight, and the garden below can be seen.* LADY CHALE, *a handsome woman about forty, and* MRS. RALPH WUTHERING *are sitting at each end of a sofa engaged in work.* ADA WUTHERING *is making lace;* LADY CHALE *is knitting a charity shawl. They are both dressed in the height of fashion.* MRS. BISTERN, *a pretty woman about twenty-six, is reading a large book. The footmen are just leaving the room with coffee cups. A servant is offering cigarettes. There is a short silence.*

ADA WUTHERING (*looking up*).

Where is Georgina?

LADY CHALE.

She has gone upstairs to have her hair done higher. (KATE *yawns.*) But she is so pretty that nothing matters. She is lovely to-night.

ADA (*with an ill grace*).

Hardly that, yet, when one looks at her, I suppose one *does* think her pretty. (KATE *yawns. This time both women look at her.*) She wants to look especially nice when the Duke comes back this evening.

LADY CHALE.

She will spoil an excellent husband.

ADA.

And the vulgarity of taking so much trouble! Such bad taste! Fools will take her for a fool!

LADY CHALE.

But she's extravagantly devoted to the Duke. It is a pity, of course—a great pity.

KATE.

Where is her dignity? I ask no more. One should not love as much as one pleases, but as much as one ought. The Duke will lose his esteem for her.

ADA.

I hate a man who can only love those whom he esteems. He always runs away with his friend's wife.

LADY CHALE.

Ada, you are too young for these ideas. People will think that your husband is unkind to you.

ADA.

Why? Doesn't every one know that my marriage was for love—and—£200,000! . . . I suppose discontented women should always talk about the nightingale's note, and roses, and true lover's knots. These subjects are vague and you can hammer on 'em till all is blue! But avoid things which have made you cry: they make other people yawn.

LADY CHALE (*as* KATE *yawns again*).

Dear Kate, why are you yawning so dreadfully?

KATE.

I am trying to read Maurice Appleford's *History of Byzantine Mosaics.*

LADY CHALE.

I am sure it is *ex*cellent, but somehow, with so many things going on, it—somehow—doesn't *grip* one.

ADA.

Oh, Aunt, it's deadly—it is like the Ten Commandments with everything emotional left out?

(*Enter* FOOTMAN, *followed by* AMABEL EAST, MRS. LYNTON, *and* MRS. LUPTON MILLES.)

FOOTMAN (*announcing*).

Miss East, Mrs. Lynton, and Mrs. Lupton.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*correcting him*).

Mrs. Lupton Milles.

FOOTMAN.

And Mrs. Lupton Milles.

(*He goes out.*)

LADY CHALE (*rising*).

Ah, Miss East, my niece has told me so much about you. This is an unexpected pleasure.

AMABEL.

You are very kind. I will explain my call in a minute.

Let me introduce my aunts—Mrs. Lynton and Mrs. Lupton Milles.

(They bow stiffly and seat themselves on distant chairs.)

LADY CHALE.

You were at the Convent School with Georgina, I believe.

AMABEL.

Yes, but I am some years older than Georgina. I went back to the Convent to rest after my third season.

LADY CHALE.

How peaceful!

AMABEL *(romantically)*.

Especially to one who hates the world as I do. When I am in the world my heart is like a little boat on a great sea,—it floats out into the dark, away and away and away . . . oh, how often I have wished to sink for ever under the waves and rest beneath them.

LADY CHALE.

How interesting! How poetical!

AMABEL.

I love Swinburne and science and dogs. I live for my dogs.

LADY CHALE.

How kind!

AMABEL.

But history is my real interest. I collate documents. I once knew a historian. *(Sighs deeply.)* Georgina asked me to

go to the Merediths' ball with her to-night. I came in to say that I must go first to an At Home given by some old friends of my father's.

LADY CHALE.

How tiresome !

AMABEL.

Well, just tell Georgina that I hope to get back in an hour's time. I leave London for St. Petersburg to-morrow morning.

LADY CHALE.

Do you travel alone ?

AMABEL.

Oh no.

MRS. LYNTON AND MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*in unison*).

We always travel with Amabel.

LADY CHALE.

Oh, they always travel with you.

(*Enter* FOOTMAN.)

FOOTMAN.

Her Grace would be glad to see Miss East upstairs.

AMABEL.

I'll come at once.

(*She goes out followed by the* FOOTMAN.)

LADY CHALE (*to the aunts*).

Your niece looks rather delicate.

MRS. LYNTON (*to* MRS. LUPTON MILLES).

That is what I say. You hear, Fanny ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*confidentially*).

But she isn't really delicate, Lady Chale : it isn't her chest, it is her mind.

LADY CHALE (*bored*).

Indeed !

MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*to* MRS. LYNTON).

Shall I tell her ? Yes, I will. You have a feeling heart, I'm sure. (*Lady Chale bows very coldly*). The fact is my niece has had an unfortunate attachment. I won't mention names, because it isn't safe, but she fell in love with a young man of good family about five years ago. We couldn't give our consent to the engagement, and she's never been the same since.

MRS. LYNTON.

And the offers she has had—the *chances*, so to say !

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

I assure you, Lady Chale, we don't know what to do with her. The young man in question was, as we thought, after her money. He was very steady : he wrote books and was, so far, a nice, kind man. But could we let her throw herself away ?

MRS. LYNTON (*to* LADY CHALE).

And now what do you think ?

LADY CHALE (*still bored*).

I cannot guess.

MRS. LYNTON.

He has come into a large fortune of his own, bless you! (*To her sister*) Shall I tell the rest? Yes, I will. And he has a title, too!

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Now, don't say any more, Sarah. You will regret it. But, in justice to the man, *I* may mention that he proposed again.

LADY CHALE.

Then why didn't she accept him?

MRS. LYNTON.

Pride, Lady Chale, pride. Having said, "No, thank you," when he was poor, she is determined not to say "Yes, please," now that he is rich.

LADY CHALE.

I think that is rather morbid.

MRS. LYNTON.

So do I.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

She is wearing us out. But what can one do with girls at the present day? She is taking us to Russia—for I don't know how long, and it is most disheartening.

(*Enter* FOOTMAN.)

FOOTMAN.

Miss East is waiting in the hall for Mrs. Lynton and Mrs. Lupton Milles.

(*They rise.*)

MRS. LYNTON.

Goodbye, Lady Chale.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Goodbye, Lady Chale. Pray let none of this go any further.

(LADY CHALE *bows frigidly. They go out.*)

ADA.

Who on earth was that good-looking girl in pink and pearls and pathos ?

LADY CHALE.

The girl is a school friend of Georgina's,—Amabel East.

ADA.

Oh, I know. The heiress—thirty thousand a year. Her father was East and Holker's—the china shop, you know.

KATE.

Georgina says she is dreadfully afraid of being married for her money.

LADY CHALE.

I can believe that men would admire her very much. I gather, too, that she is entangled in a hopeless attachment.

ADA.

An excellent thing. By the time she is disentangled, she will be the best company possible ! And who were the infernal old bores ?

LADY CHALE.

Her two aunts.

ADA.

By the by, what are the men talking about? What a time they are!

LADY CHALE.

Why is Appleford so moody this evening?

ADA.

I can't help wondering why he doesn't marry.

KATE.

The chief reason is that he is not in love with anybody.

ADA.

There must be somebody—there always *is* somebody!

(*Enter* LORD APPLEFORD, BISTERN, WUTHERING, *and* BERTRAM ROMNEY.)

ROMNEY.

Where is Georgina?

BISTERN (*to* KATE).

I suppose it is quite settled about the Merediths? You are going?

KATE.

Of course. Now, run away and play cards with Ralph, there's a dear darling!

(BISTERN *goes up to card-table.*)

WUTHERING (*to* ADA).

What is the programme?

ADA.

You are to play cards and be quiet till we start. But be nice about it.

WUTHERING.

Nice! I like that. As if I wouldn't far rather remain at home with you.

ADA.

With me! My dear Ralph, are you becoming a humourist?

(WUTHERING *goes up and joins* ROMNEY *and* BISTERN.)

ADA (*to* APPLEFORD).

You see *we* have been reading your book! (*Holds it up.*)

APPLEFORD.

That's good of you! But I wish you had cut the leaves first! (*To Kate.*) Where is Georgina? What a lucky fellow Sydney is! Let us hope that this marriage will turn out well.

LADY CHALE.

It must turn out well, my dear Appleford. It is already a great success. Let me see—how long is it since the wedding?

APPLEFORD.

Just a fortnight.

LADY CHALE.

This, then, is the first evening that the Duke has dined out and left her at home.

ADA.

That speaks well for her. She has kept him amused for a fortnight.

APPLEFORD.

Wait a little longer. Georgina is very young: the Duke is but nine-and-twenty . . . and a cynic.

KATE.

I suppose he is. This would seem the one drawback.

APPLEFORD.

His cynicism is all right. I don't fear that. But a man who is cynical at thirty will be romantic at forty-nine. And I am thinking of his romance. There's the danger For Georgina, who is romantic at nineteen, may be cynical at fifty. And then . . . ho! ho!

ADA.

As you say . . . and then—ho! ho!

LADY CHALE.

This new way of talking is absurd. One would think, to hear you all, that life was something remarkable, whereas it is the most ordinary affair. . . . Georgina and the Duke are perfectly contented, so far.

KATE.

If it will only last!

APPLEFORD.

Why shouldn't it last?

KATE.

Because human nature is treacherous. I always cry when I see two people happy!

BISTERN (*at card-table*).

Do you bet?

APPLEFORD.

Where did you say that Sydney was dining this evening?

LADY CHALE.

He is the guest of the evening at the Cut-of-Mutton Club. Of course you will ask what he has done to deserve it.

KATE.

Good gracious! What a man has done bores everybody, but what he is going to do is always delightful.

ADA.

It's such fun wondering whether he is going to fail.

APPLEFORD.

I'm very sick of persons with careers.

KATE.

Yet you used to be ambitious.

APPLEFORD.

Was I?

ADA.

The Cut-of-Mutton, they all tell me, is the best club in London.

APPLEFORD.

As for the Carlton, it *was* a club. It is now a crowd. The Athenæum was a stronghold. It is now a waiting-room.

WUTHERING (*at card-table*).

What cards you are holding!

ADA.

Sydney will be lucky if they elect him at the Cut-of Mutton.

APPLEFORD.

Perhaps it is a brilliant stroke on the part of his rivals. They want to excite envy against him.

KATE.

Well, they were very keen to get him there this evening. They called him away from his honeymoon.

(APPLEFORD *leaves them and saunters toward the card-players.*)

ADA.

My dear Kate, how does Georgina seem to you ?

KATE.

Quite as usual.

ADA.

Do you think she minds the Duke dining out without her ?

KATE.

Oh no. You see, it is a political dinner, and she is most ambitious about his public career.

ADA.

What did she do after lunch ?

KATE.

She played the piano.

ADA.

What did she do before tea ?

KATE.

She played the piano.

ADA.

And—after tea ?

KATE.

She played the piano.

ADA.

Then she means to be happy. All the same, I must see her before he comes back. Everything turns on this meeting. The Duke—every man—is practically three men. There is the man you know before he proposes : there is the man you have accepted : there is the man you have married.

BISTERN (*at card-table*).

I can't get a pair.

KATE (*rising*).

Yes, there is the man you have married ! . . . If I see Georgina I will send her to you.

(*She goes out and* APPLEFORD *again comes down.*)

APPLEFORD.

Where *is* Georgina ?

ADA.

At this crisis in her life, a *woman's* tact is wanted. Let me see her first.

APPLEFORD.

Crisis ! What do you mean ?

ADA.

Is not this the first evening since their marriage that they have not spent together ?

APPLEFORD.

I hope Georgina will never put sentimentality in the way of Sydney's career.

ADA.

The Duke is a very odd young man.

APPLEFORD.

He has a strong character, but the stronger the will the less inconstant the heart.

ADA.

Do you mean to tell me that he has never flirted?

APPLEFORD.

I would not go so far as that!

ADA.

At one time, people said he was running after some common little thing with a lot of money. Did you ever hear that?

APPLEFORD.

Never.

ADA.

Boys, of course, are *always* taken in.

APPLEFORD.

Once married, however, Sydney will be faithful to his wife, whether he has to regard her as a cross, or an angel. It is easy enough to be faithful to some one you love, but to be faithful to some one you don't love, that, in my opinion, is true virtue.

ADA.

Oh, I am so miserable !

APPLEFORD.

You, too !

ADA.

I am carrying a burden of hate on my soul ; do you hear ? —hate ! Most women have a secret love—I have a secret hate. It gives me no peace. Have some pity on me !

APPLEFORD.

If I felt it, could I show it ? Yet no one in the world is more devoted to you than I am.

ADA.

Oh, I know that.

WUTHERING (*at card-table*).

Do you bet ?

BISTERN.

No.

APPLEFORD.

Whom do you hate ? Let me see if I can guess . . . Surely it is not . . .

ADA.

It is Georgina ! I hate her, and there is nothing—nothing—nothing I wouldn't do to spite her.

APPLEFORD.

But what has she done ?

ADA.

I know that she is charming, but—she has all the money —and all the friends of the family !

APPLEFORD.

But there is more than this in so much hatred.

ADA.

You are right. I have always thought that if she had not come home from school just when she did, St. Asaph would have married me. Every one thought so.

APPLEFORD.

My dear girl, you must get that notion out of your head. St. Asaph never had the least intention of marrying you.

ADA.

How do you know?

APPLEFORD.

I do know; and if you encourage yourself in this idea, you will be extremely wretched and supremely foolish.

ADA.

I don't care. He paid me great attention. He admired me, at any rate. He put me in a false position, and so—just out of embarrassment—I made a ridiculous marriage myself!

APPLEFORD.

Was it so very ridiculous?

ADA.

Of course. But it is only by marriage that a poor girl, with even decent looks, can live peaceably among the

nicest women ! And so—I married a person I met at a party. I knew nothing about him, and he cared nothing about me. It was all a question of property and pleasing people.

APPLEFORD.

This is a very sad business.

ADA.

Of course it is sad !

APPLEFORD.

Now, if you will take my advice . . .

ADA.

I never take your advice, and that is why I still trust you, and also why . . .

APPLEFORD.

Yes ?

ADA.

You still trust me ! Ah, here is Georgina.

(*Enter the Duchess of St. Asaph.*)

GEORGINA.

Has Sydney come back yet ?

(ADA *moves away.*)

APPLEFORD.

I doubt whether he could get away so soon. You are most fortunate, Georgina !

GEORGINA.

It seems a real love story at last, doesn't it?

APPLEFORD (*taking her hands*).

Then you are happy? I cannot see you and doubt it.

GEORGINA.

Yet you always sigh when you look at me.

APPLEFORD.

Because you remind me—I don't know why—of some one I knew long ago.

GEORGINA.

Is she dead?

APPLEFORD.

To me—yes.

GEORGINA (*innocently*).

Does that mean that she is married?

APPLEFORD (*smiling*).

No.

GEORGINA (*confidently*).

Then you may not have to sigh *every* time you see me.

(*She presses his hand and moves away to the sofa.*)

ADA (*returning to* APPLEFORD).

You must let me talk to her.

APPLEFORD.

Georgina's great charm is her simplicity. Her thoughts are in her face. It is as clear as glass.

ADA.

How lucky it is, then, that, so far, she has not met many women ! I must put her on her guard.

APPLEFORD.

I love her candour and affection. All men prefer that kind of thing.

ADA.

Please let me know best.

(APPLEFORD *goes up, shrugging his shoulders.*)

ADA (*going over to* GEORGINA *and bringing her down*).

How do you like dining at home again with all of us ?

GEORGINA.

I feel as though I were a stranger.

ADA.

Stranger ! In your old home—with us — your own cousins !

GEORGINA.

Well, you see, I don't know Kate very well, and although this is my aunt's house, I don't know her very well !

ADA.

Well, you are very lucky in your husband !

GEORGINA.

Have you seen us together ?

ADA.

Yes, and I must say I was surprised by a few things I noticed during your engagement.

GEORGINA.

Oh, that was a happy time! Some people say that the engagement days are the best in a woman's life, but any day would be perfect if Sydney were with me!

ADA.

I should think so! You look at him—watch him from every corner. He looks at you—watches you from every corner. If you move, he moves. If you get up, he gets up. If he plays billiards, you play billiards. If he walks, you walk. If he wishes to ride, you wish to ride. As things are at present, he could swear by you! I can see nothing but disaster.

GEORGINA.

How little you know him!

ADA.

You mean *you* don't know men! With men you must be like the quail—a little uncertain. You will bore him. Now when he comes back this evening . . .

GEORGINA.

Yes?

ADA.

Remember that this is a crisis. Be an enigma—be subtle,—that kind of thing. Men like mysterious women.

GEORGINA.

But I am not a mystery.

ADA (*severely*).

You must make yourself one. For instance, when he comes, what will be your first impulse ?

GEORGINA.

Well, the impulse will be to put my arms round his neck.

ADA (*breathlessly*).

Then . . .

GEORGINA.

I may say how much I have missed him.

ADA (*horrified*).

Go on !

GEORGINA.

I shall sit on the ground at his feet, and put my head against his knee,—so—and . . .

ADA (*sadly*).

Yes, that is one's impulse . But it must be checked. Marriage is a discipline of character . . . nothing else.

GEORGINA.

But Sydney is so sympathetic. I understand him before he speaks.

ADA.

Nothing could be more dangerous, or—later on—duller ! There will be no conversation.

GEORGINA.

You see, he is so thoughtful—he likes quiet women.

ADA.

I own that it is bad taste for a woman to be too amusing. Even men are only witty when they have to be so for their bread and butter. But, to return to instincts :—of course, you won't follow out this lower middle-class impulse.

GEORGINA.

I don't see why I shouldn't.

ADA.

Because he will not always leave dinners early, and you will not always be glad to see him home so soon. Don't make traditions.

GEORGINA (*sarcastically*).

Then what would you suggest?

ADA.

Well . . . show great surprise, ask no questions, give no hint about your own goings on in his absence,—in fact, say nothing at all, and he may tell you a great deal.

GEORGINA (*romantically*).

How differently we see things—you and I! I would devote every feeling, every thought, each hour, each instant of existence to Sydney. Such love I expect in return; without it I should not wish to live.

ADA.

My dear, a man with a career can have no time to waste upon his wife or his friends—he has to devote himself wholly to his enemies!

GEORGINA.

I wonder if you are right. Sydney has that quality in him which would call a woman who loved him to follow him to an attic—privations—worse!

ADA.

Ah, well, as it happens, you need only accompany him to race meetings.

KATE (*coming down to them*).

My dear Georgina, where did you get that gown?

GEORGINA.

It is one of my trousseau gowns.

KATE.

I can't bear it. A little thirty-guinea gown is quite enough when you're dining quietly at home. Why trail round in such gorgeous things.

GEORGINA.

Why shouldn't I look my best to please my own husband?

KATE.

I cannot go into that. All I know is that when I first married I never wore anything more *décolletée* than a V.

GEORGINA.

If I don't please him some other woman will.

ADA.

How do I manage? This way. I am nice—I am young—I am good-tempered—I am not dull. Why then should I worry myself? Ralph can't meet a pleasanter woman. If he wants a change, he must find some vulgar, horrid little climber.

KATE (*ignoring her and turning to* GEORGINA).

Sydney will esteem you very lightly. He can't place you on a pedestal apart.

GEORGINA.

Why should he? I am not an heirloom!

KATE (*austerely*).

Remember that beauty passes away, but the irresistible force of virtue is a permanent attraction.

GEORGINA.

But can't one be just as virtuous in a pretty gown?

KATE.

That is an improper gown. But I decline to argue.

ADA.

What do you know of life? One can be taught how to make it excusable, but experience only can make it endurable.

GEORGINA.

I have never thought about life at all before.

ADA.

You were brought up in a Convent. You went on feast days to your mother's grave, and, once a year, you were taken to a concert.

GEORGINA.

But sometimes to a *matinée* at the Français.

ADA.

Heavens! how dull! You came here for your first season. . . . The Duke met you—fell in love with you . . .

GEORGINA (*interrupting*).

And travelled in order to forget me! But he says that whenever he looked at the sky he thought of me!

ADA.

Ah, if a man wants to forget a woman he should keep his gaze off the sky, and look out for another pair of eyes! At any rate, he came back to you and married you. There's your little history. But, remember this, the joy of living consists, for a man, in being constantly false to some ever-faithful woman!

KATE.

That's true—every word of it!

(*She moves away as* JOYNBEE, GEORGINA'S *old nurse, comes in.*)

JOYNBEE.

Is this the scarf, miss? . . . I mean, your Grace. I never can remember.

GEORGINA.

Yes.

JOYNBEE.

Why are you so pale and thoughtful, your Grace?

GEORGINA.

Oh, I don't know, nurse.

JOYNBEE.

Not know—upon my heart and life, what next?

GEORGINA.

I shall never know how to manage men.

JOYNBEE.

Why, bless my soul! there's no harm in them, really. They may be trying, but gentlemen *are* that way.

GEORGINA.

But Ada and Kate both say that you must not tell your husband the truth.

JOYNBEE.

I wouldn't go so far as that. But keep a lot of little things to yourself, my lamb. Don't tell any man *all* you know. They aren't able to bear it. Remember what they are and the words of Job—"Man that is born of woman" . . . we bring them into the world and they do all they can to send us out of it.

GEORGINA.

Oh, if I thought that. . . .

JOYNBEE.

My poppet, they never intend anything unkind—not they. But when they see some slip of a woman and they happen to remember what a lot she has to do and suffer and think, poor thing, they merely want to put her out of her misery. Ah, man would be shocking if he weren't so natural.

GEORGINA.

What shall I do?

JOYNBEE.

My advice is this. Be as nice as you can, hold your tongue, and say your prayers regular.

(ROMNEY *comes down and joins* GEORGINA *as* JOYNBEE *goes out.*)

ROMNEY.

I've had good luck this evening. I've been winning.

GEORGINA.

What will you buy?

ROMNEY.

The one thing I want is not to be bought.

GEORGINA.

What is that?

ROMNEY (*intensely*).

Forgetfulness.

GEORGINA (*affecting not to understand*).

What do you want to forget, Bertram?

ROMNEY.

The old days in Paris.

GEORGINA.

Weren't they fun? Do you remember you used to bring me marrons glacés? How I used to look forward to those visits!

ROMNEY.

Did you really look forward to them, Georgina?

GEORGINA.

Of course. You were the only man who ever came to see me at the Convent. What talks we used to have!

ROMNEY.

You won't spare much time for me now, I suppose? You are so wrapped up in Sydney.

GEORGINA (*cheerfully*).

Why don't you marry, Bertram?

ROMNEY (*gloomily*).

I shall never marry.

GEORGINA (*confidentially*).

Tell me, are Ada and Kate happy in their marriages?

ROMNEY.

Well, Ralph Wuthering, of course, tells Kate all his troubles.

GEORGINA.

But Kate is Tommie's wife.

ROMNEY.

Naturally, that is why she admires Ralph. He is fine,—really fine, you know.

GEORGINA.

In what way?

ROMNEY.

In a spiritual sense. Ralph's friendship with Kate is very beautiful. We all feel it. Wuthering is so literary, too. Haven't you read *Twilights in Turkey*? Every one says it's simply vital.

GEORGINA.

I have never heard either Ralph Wuthering or Tommie Bistern speak.

ROMNEY.

They never talk before their wives. You must get them alone.

GEORGINA.

How strange all this seems!

ROMNEY.

It does at first. But it answers. That's the thing.

(APPLEFORD *comes down to them and* ROMNEY *moves away.*)

APPLEFORD.

Now I think I may interrupt you.

GEORGINA.

How glad I am to see you! Are you well? You look tired. Tell me what you think of my husband. Isn't he clever? Isn't he charming?

APPLEFORD.

Almost he deserves you!

GEORGINA.

He will be a great man some day—a Prime Minister—I am sure of that. My pride—then!

APPLEFORD.

We must manage it to please you! Now, shall I show my faith in you by telling you a secret? Twamerville is to be made a peer and sent as Governor to Beltoria. This creates a little vacancy.

GEORGINA.

Yes. . . .

APPLEFORD.

Would you like to see your Duke the Secretary for the Dockyards?

GEORGINA (*clasping her hands*).

Would that be possible? It seems too much to hope for!

APPLEFORD.

I can do my best, at any rate, and, in the meantime, be discreet.

GEORGINA.

But that is so difficult.

APPLEFORD.

Well, discretion generally means having a good memory for the lies you have told, but, in this case, I merely ask you to forget the lies your husband may be obliged to tell!

GEORGINA.

I don't want to be a selfish wife. I wish to think always of his future. I won't keep him to myself. I won't make demands upon his time. He shall just work and work and work!

APPLEFORD.

Will he wish you to be so disinterested? Now, how long have we two known each other?

GEORGINA.

Oh, I forget. Ever so long. Why, you knew mama!

APPLEFORD.

Happy women don't need friends.

GEORGINA.

How can I be happy if I think only of Sydney's career?

APPLEFORD.

No; unselfish women may be thankful, and, possibly, after many tears, contented, but happy—hardly. By nature, you are jealous . . .

GEORGINA.

No!

APPLEFORD.

Yes, you are! By nature, you detest his future. By nature, you want him to be with you always.

GEORGINA.

But—wait—I conquer this . . .

APPLEFORD.

And, womanlike, go to the opposite extreme!

GEORGINA.

I want to keep his love always.

APPLEFORD.

Then remember this always. Neither a sweet disposition, nor tact, nor flattery, nor good looks can chain a man's affection. One thing only counts.

GEORGINA.

And that?

APPLEFORD.

His own inclination. When a man loves a woman she can be as cross, or stupid, or unkind as she pleases.

GEORGINA.

And when he doesn't love her?

APPLEFORD.

If she were an angel from heaven she couldn't keep him for five minutes.

GEORGINA.

Oh, why do you tell me these sad things?

APPLEFORD.

Because I want your married life to be a great success. What is it that can bear disillusion, disappointment, your absence, and, above all, your presence?

GEORGINA.

Love, of course!

APPLEFORD.

No, dear lady, friendship. (*She remains silent.*)

(*Enter* BISTERN *and* WUTHERING.)

BISTERN.

What a time St. Asaph is! (*To Georgina.*) You mustn't mind St. Asaph dining out, my dear. Think of his position, his career.

WUTHERING.

Yes, one must sing for one's supper in this low world.

BISTERN.

And treat his views with deference. He will get enough criticism from outside. Let him feel himself in the right always—in his own house, at least!

WUTHERING.

And, another thing! If he gets an idea, don't discourage it at once. Keep cheerful and bright. If women thought less of their own souls and more about men's tempers, marriage wouldn't be what it is.

GEORGINA.

What is it?

WUTHERING.

What is it? Can you ask? Talk to Ada—talk to Tommie—talk to Kate—talk to the whole lot of 'em . . . talk to Sydney himself!

(*Two very tall footmen enter announcing*)

His Grace the Duke of St. Asaph.

(ST. ASAPH *enters. The footmen go out.* GEORGINA *does not move.* ST. ASAPH *looks at her, smiles at her, seems rather puzzled, but does not address her.*)

APPLEFORD.

Well, did the dinner go off well?

ST. ASAPH.

Yes, capitally.

APPLEFORD.

Who was chairman? The Duke of Hampshire?

ST. ASAPH.

Oh, much better than that.

APPLEFORD.

No!

ST. ASAPH.

Guess! But you couldn't. It was Bradgers!

APPLEFORD (*delighted*).

No, not Bradgers!

ST. ASAPH.

Yes. I first ran across him in the hall. I saw him nodding at me: couldn't believe my senses! But he kept on nodding, so I went swaggering up to him, hoping everybody saw me!

GEORGINA.

Who on earth is Bradgers? Does he write for the papers?

ST. ASAPH.

No, newspapers are played out, according to Bradgers. The great thing now is a penny pamphlet. Bradgers wrote pamphlets, "Are Britons Slaves?" "One Man, One Income"—everybody read 'em—and now—he's here!

GEORGINA.

Where?

ST. ASAPH.

I mean he might be here . . . talking with us now. Consummate! He is, beyond a doubt, the man of the minute. (*Ingenuously*) Wasn't it kind of him to go out of his way to notice me?

APPLEFORD (*to* MRS. BISTERN).

Kate, I want you to play that lovely thing of Perosi's.

(KATE *goes into the Blue Saloon and is heard playing during the following scene.* LADY CHALE, APPLEFORD, *and* ADA *follow her.* ST. ASAPH *stands in the middle of the room, looking from one to the other, then picks up a magazine from the table. When they have all disappeared, he throws down the book and rushes across to* GEORGINA.)

ST. ASAPH.

At last !

GEORGINA (*primly*).

Don't you want some tea ?

ST. ASAPH (*looking round*).

It's all right. They're not there.

GEORGINA.

I should have said that just the same.

ST. ASAPH.

What a silly thing to say, darling ! You know I hate tea.

GEORGINA.

I am so glad you went to the dinner. It must have been an interesting change.

ST. ASAPH.

I thought it a beastly bore ! Men's dinners are dreary. I never was at so dull a dinner ! I kept thinking of you the whole time. What an eternity it seems since I saw you last !

GEORGINA.

Don't say things just to please me, Sydney, because, if we are to be happy . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Well, this isn't making me particularly happy. I don't understand you at all.

GEORGINA (*pleased*).

You mean you think I am mysterious?

ST. ASAPH.

Yes . . . I think I should. Here I come worshipping you—adoring you, and then . . .

GEORGINA.

But, you see, women—like quails—are uncertain.

ST. ASAPH.

What a revolting thought! Why, the very thing I love you for is your honesty. You have no caprices, no airs, no nonsense. I can swear by you.

GEORGINA.

But that is all wrong. You must never swear by me. You must never be able to say just what I am going to do next. Marriage is a discipline of character. For instance, do you still think me pretty?

ST. ASAPH.

You grow prettier every hour.

GEORGINA.

Kate says that a woman's looks only matter during the first week of marriage, afterwards, one may as well be plain as beautiful.

ST. ASAPH.

Mrs. Bistern has made so many experiments that she has had no time to gain experience.

GEORGINA.

I don't understand.

ST. ASAPH.

Perhaps not. But experience means sticking to one person. You learn a lot that way. (*He watches her for a minute, then goes up to her as if struck by a sudden idea.*) I say, you didn't really mind my going to the dinner, did you?

GEORGINA (*indignant.*)

Didn't I implore you to go? Didn't I cry till you said you would go?

ST. ASAPH.

Then have I offended you?

GEORGINA.

Not at all.

ST. ASAPH.

But you must see that this is not the way . . . oh, when we first met—do you remember?

GEORGINA.

We were friends then, and it was all different.

ST. ASAPH.

You are so beautiful, and I have dared to love you. If I had told you at once how much I loved you, what would you have said? I loved you, I believe, the first moment I saw you. I couldn't tell you for a long time. I was afraid to speak lest you should turn into a little bird and fly away. If you knew what all this means to me—if you knew—you wouldn't stand so far away and look so cold.

GEORGINA (*half aside*).

Oh, it is impossible to be more unhappy. My heart is like aching ice.

ST. ASAPH.

I have told you the truth—the sincere, terrible truth, which almost frightens me. You are all I care for in this world. I adore you, dearest, I adore you! How long have we known each other?

GEORGINA.

Why?

ST. ASAPH.

I want to know whether you remember.

GEORGINA.

Six months, four days, and seven hours! Oh, you do love me, don't you?

ST. ASAPH.

I think of you always. I see you always. I hear you always. I would be with you always. I have loved you always, and I will love you always!

GEORGINA (*forgetting her instructions*).

Oh, we are too happy !

ST. ASAPH.

I know that if men deserved happiness, they would bear it better . . . Darling, you had a very nice way of putting your face against mine. This always happened when you looked over my shoulder to read the *Spectator*.

GEORGINA.

I was so fond of the *Spectator !*

ST. ASAPH.

Yes, one is . . . I remember I used to think what a pity it was that the *Spectator* came out only *once* a week !

GEORGINA.

What a pity it is that no one can know how truly happy we are !

ST. ASAPH.

Ah, there is that fatal desire which all women have to excite envy. Is it not sufficient for us to be here alone, out of the world's reach ? To me this would be but half a blessing were it not a kind of secret—a hidden life between ourselves.

GEORGINA.

Perhaps. Yet, I think it rather selfish. It would encourage the others if they could see a really fortunate marriage.

ST. ASAPH.

Ah, you don't know human nature as well as I know it.

GEORGINA (*with a look of terror*).

Ah!

ST. ASAPH.

What is the matter?

GEORGINA.

Why did you speak of human nature? I was just forgetting it.

ST. ASAPH.

Why do you have these sudden caprices? You are enchanting—then, suddenly, you say unheard-of things!

GEORGINA.

Conscience re-asserts itself.

ST. ASAPH.

You are much too young to have a conscience. There is something on your mind. A moment ago you were perfect, and now . . .

GEORGINA.

That was false happiness. I knew it could not last. There was not enough discipline about it.

ST. ASAPH.

Better a false happiness than a real misery. I cannot understand you.

GEORGINA.

I suppose you wish me to be meretricious.

ST. ASAPH.

I want you to be yourself.

GEORGINA.

Then see me as I am. I must be honest.

ST. ASAPH.

This is not you as you are. What has caused this mood? You know the story of my life. Our family has been distinguished for its wretched marriages. I represent the seventh generation and I want the luck to change. In you I see my one hope. People call me bitter, sour, rude—perhaps I am. You, my dearest, can alter all things for me. But never try to alter yourself.

GEORGINA.

Which is worse—the good that does evil, or the evil that does good?

ST. ASAPH.

What a strange question! Why do you think of such enigmas?

GEORGINA.

Because I want to keep your love for ever, and I don't know how to keep it.

ST. ASAPH.

I see that some one has been talking to you. (*She remains*

silent.) They have all been talking to you—these brainless, heartless, overfed, and under-educated women. I abhor them. They rush about making young wives miserable with their infernal advice. I won't have one of them cross my threshold!

GEORGINA.

I try to be civil to every one. I listen to every one. But I also know when to say "I will and I must." Yes, you can trust me.

ST. ASAPH.

Still, you don't explain. . . . Have you changed in some way? You seem another woman—quite as pretty, . . . but . . .

GEORGINA.

Perhaps I have changed a little.

ST. ASAPH (*studying her*).

There is something. . . . It must be your hair. Ah, that is it, of course.

GEORGINA.

Do you like it this way?

ST. ASAPH (*in doubt*).

I can't be sure . . . yet——

GEORGINA.

Tell me, are my aunt and uncle happy? Are Kate and Ada happy?

ST. ASAPH.

One at a time! Aunt and uncle respect each other. Ralph and Ada respect society. Kate and Tommie respect the devil!

GEORGINA.

Is Ralph kind to Ada?

ST. ASAPH.

Oh, he tries to make her happy in a grave, long-winded way. You've read that book of his—*Twilights in Turkey*—haven't you?

GEORGINA.

But Bertram says she gets on better with Kate's husband, Tommie Bistern.

ST. ASAPH (*annoyed*).

Bistern belongs to the old Eton set, brilliant and careless, full of gentlemanly dare-devil, that's all. Ada may find him more amusing than Ralph.

GEORGINA.

Then why is she so bitter always?

ST. ASAPH.

Because she was beautiful and poor, and she thought she would mend matters by being beautiful and rich. She is what people call a disappointed woman.

(ADA *enters.*)

GEORGINA.

Hush! She will hear us.

(GEORGINA *moves up and on to balcony.*)

ADA.

Dear Sydney—I suppose I may call you Sydney now. Georgina is too young to understand all that she has in gaining your love. But I am sure she will always do her best to deserve it. She is most ambitious.

ST. ASAPH (*surprised*).

Ambitious ! Ambitious people are always easily bored. Their minds, I suppose, are restless. I know that Georgina is clever, but I never thought——

ADA.

She takes such a childish delight, for the moment, in her new title !

ST. ASAPH (*unhappy*).

The title ! She cares nothing about it.

ADA.

Of course she does ! I daresay she feels lonely among us, but Bertram is here. She is very fond of Bertram.

ST. ASAPH.

Who is that ? Bertram Romney ?

ADA.

Yes. You know that he was in Paris for two years learning French. He was dreadfully in love with her, poor fellow ! I don't *know* that she encouraged him. . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Very natural that she should like him . . . her own cousin.

ADA.

Nothing could be more natural. He is good-looking, too.

ST. ASAPH (*changing the subject*).

I have seen little of you since your own marriage, Ada.

ADA.

Oh . . . that . . . I shall never expect happiness again.

ST. ASAPH.

The wisest are those who can best adjust their disadvantages!

ADA.

Oh, I don't believe a bit in the calm, unmoved man! I think it is only that he doesn't show his feelings outwardly. I know you have had your share of trouble. It is in your face.

(GEORGINA *appears with* APPLEFORD *from balcony*.)

ST. ASAPH.

Why, I thought we all wore masks here, saying what we do not believe, eating and drinking things we do not want, and then abusing each other in good earnest.

WUTHERING (*from balcony*).

Sydney, they want you to hear this.

ST. ASAPH (*going*).

All right, I'll come.

(*He goes out, passing* GEORGINA.

ADA.

Well, my dear?

GEORGINA (*coming down*).

Oh, Ada, Sydney looks so unhappy.

ADA.

That, my dear, is the way a young man who has just been married ought to look.

GEORGINA.

But still, ours is a love match—we love each other. He loved me the first time he saw me.

ADA.

Men, my dear, after considering a woman for months, invariably decide that they loved her at first sight. Of course I have always liked Sydney, although his enemies say that he is an intriguer.

GEORGINA (*indignantly*).

An intriguer! My husband an intriguer!

ADA.

I don't say so. His enemies say so.

GEORGINA.

What else do his enemies say?

ADA.

They used to say he was a flirt. I never could believe that he was as fickle as they thought.

GEORGINA.

Fickle ?

ADA.

The women pursued him. Was it his fault ? He was very rich, and the *dernier cri* among the Dukes ! And then there was that story . . .

GEORGINA.

What story ?

ADA.

Oh, the usual story . . . about an undesirable person !

GEORGINA.

Then, I wonder why he married me ?

ADA.

Because you were striking, well brought up, and an heiress, and also, of course, because you happened to take his fancy.

GEORGINA.

I see . . .

ADA.

I daresay he felt, too, that you were very much in love with him. Men pretend not to be touched by that kind of thing—but they are.

GEORGINA (*troubled*).

Do you think that I showed any marked preference for him ?

ADA.

Of course! And it answered very well. It was the cleverest thing you could have done.

GEORGINA.

Clever! Do you suppose that I thought . .

ADA.

My dear child, of course, I don't say that you fished for him, but he happened to be just the kind of man who could be caught by your particular manner. And you are his Duchess—isn't that sufficient? Come and play Bridge.

GEORGINA.

No . . . I'd rather hear Kate play.

ADA (*following her*).

Ah! Then you are beginning to like Wagner?

(ST. ASAPH *and* APPLEFORD *enter.*)

ST. ASAPH.

Do come and talk. You don't seem yourself this evening.

APPLEFORD.

I am going abroad for a long time.

ST. ASAPH.

The old passion for travel has come over you.

APPLEFORD.

I feel restless and dissatisfied here. I wish you hadn't married—you might have come with me. Why did you marry this year?

ST. ASAPH.

Well, unlike you, I wished to settle down. Besides, I am going in for politics. Men forget your existence when they no longer see you at the Carlton. I am heartily sick of globe-trotting now. I have done my share.

APPLEFORD.

You didn't really care about it. I often wonder how you came to start at all.

ST. ASAPH.

Well, I will tell you—it doesn't matter now. I was much cut up by a love affair.

APPLEFORD.

So I gathered at the time, although you said nothing.

ST. ASAPH.

She was a very beautiful girl—brilliant . . .

APPLEFORD.

Well connected?

ST. ASAPH.

Sound and commercial. Paternal grandfather an alderman. Mother—daughter of a naval officer—distinguished, but not smart.

APPLEFORD (*looking up*).

I understand. What happened?

ST. ASAPH.

She refused me.

APPLEFORD.

Refused you! Impossible!

ST. ASAPH.

She refused me.

APPLEFORD.

What reasons did she give?

ST. ASAPH.

She loved some one else, she said.

APPLEFORD.

Simple!

ST. ASAPH.

She left England. I was wretched for months, and then —I suppose—I got cured. I am happy now—perfectly happy, at all events. I regret nothing. (*Sighs.*) Why in the world don't you marry? Are you fickle? Are you unwilling—are you—mortgaged?

APPLEFORD.

Yes, in a way. I met a girl five years ago. . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Oh, I see. . . .

APPLEFORD.

Excuse me, you don't! I was a younger son, then—writing articles which were never accepted and living on my hopes of the great book which I have never yet written!

ST. ASAPH.

But no one else has written it, either.

APPLEFORD.

The girl was an heiress—so, what was the use ?

ST. ASAPH.

Still there was no harm in trying.

APPLEFORD.

I thought that—and I tried. She was a proud sort of girl ; but, mind you, I admire her pride, I approve of her line, I adore her inconsistency, and I can even forgive her obstinacy. I still like her better than any woman in the world.

ST. ASAPH.

I take it, then, that your offer didn't come to anything ?

APPLEFORD.

I was devoted to her. I spent days without amusement, and nights without sleep.

ST. ASAPH.

One knows when one is in earnest. Your fate may quarrel with you, but she remains your fate.

APPLEFORD.

The girl certainly led me on. For instance, she looked up all the references in my *History of Byzantine Mosaics.* (*Picks up volume from the table.*)

ST. ASAPH.

Kind, but scarcely impassioned !

APPLEFORD.

Every afternoon we took flowers to Shelley's grave.

ST. ASAPH.

Perhaps she didn't mean it seriously.

APPLEFORD.

But she was so congenial. We might have been the Brownings. As it was, we had a remarkable correspondence. Anyhow, I spoke my mind before we parted. It was in Rome. . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Moonlight . . . ruins in the distance !

APPLEFORD.

Oh no, it was at the railway station—in the morning.

ST. ASAPH.

Well, I myself have never yet seen moonlight at the right moment.

APPLEFORD.

I told her she was a flirt, and I cursed her beastly money. Her two aunts made all the mischief. She believed in me, I know. But they persuaded her that I was an insincere, mercenary ruffian, self-seeking, and all the rest.

ST. ASAPH.

A silly mistake, because if a man wants to marry an heiress there are any amount of 'em, and he needn't put himself out for one more than another.

APPLEFORD.

Her aunts kept on their devilish cackle and won the day.

ST. ASAPH.

I suppose she has settled down by this time?

APPLEFORD.

No, that's the strange thing. I haven't seen her for five years, but I hear she has promised all her fortune to some Convent, and, although many fellows have been in love with her, she snubs them all.

ST. ASAPH.

And you say she is good-looking?

APPLEFORD.

Lovely. I shall never marry any one else. I really fancied that one, and I hate being beaten. I compare other women with her; some run her pretty close: some, I daresay, beat her in minor points. But she suited me.

ST. ASAPH.

What's the good, then, of your settling down with some charming girl in a half-hearted, absent-minded way?

APPLEFORD.

I might dare to propose, and I should deserve to be refused. Now you have my view.

ST. ASAPH.

She could not have been an ordinary woman. Wouldn't it be strange if we were both speaking of the same one ?

APPLEFORD.

That is scarcely possible. What was the name . . .

(FOOTMAN *enters followed by* AMABEL EAST.)

FOOTMAN (*announcing*).

Miss East. (*He goes out.*)

APPLEFORD.

Good God !

ST. ASAPH (*going forward*).

Miss East !

AMABEL (*with a strong effort*).

It is a long time since we met. Didn't you know that I was in Paris with Georgina ?

(LADY CHALE *and* ADA *appear on balcony at back.*)

ST. ASAPH.

I didn't know.

GEORGINA (*coming forward*).

Oh, Amabel, so you have come back. Sydney, this is my surprise. I told you I expected a friend.

ST. ASAPH.

A charming one. We have met before.

GEORGINA.

Amabel, let me present Lord Appleford. Lord Appleford, this is my great friend, Miss East.

(APPLEFORD *bows.*)

AMABEL.

It is foolish of me, but . . . I am rather tired . . . I . . . I . . . (*She goes up and falls in a swoon.*)

(LADY CHALE *and* ADA WUTHERING *and* GEORGINA *rush down to her. The two men stand looking at each other.*)

ST. ASAPH.

Is that the girl ?

APPLEFORD.

That is the girl !

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE: *The Blue Saloon.* MRS. BISTERN *is just finishing the Perosi. She rises, stands by door leading into Pink Saloon and drops her handkerchief. She comes down to sofa and seats herself as* WUTHERING *enters from Pink Saloon.*

KATE.

We can talk a minute here.

WUTHERING (*seating himself*).

I could desire nothing better.

KATE.

The delight of escaping from those parochial minds and mechanic spirits!

WUTHERING.

Such petty interests! Are they conceivable?

KATE.

And as for Tommie, he is so tiresome . . .

WUTHERING (*severely, holding up his hand*).

Kate, remember our rule. I never discuss Ada with you. You never discuss Tommie with me.

KATE.

Well, then, as for Georgina.

WUTHERING.

Georgina is not subtle.

KATE.

Is she a companion for a man ?

WUTHERING.

Could she understand the union of two human souls in a singularly perfect friendship ?

KATE.

Never !

WUTHERING.

I rather tremble for her future.

KATE.

It will be very difficult for Sydney.

WUTHERING.

Poor Sydney !

KATE.

Georgina ministers wholly to the weaker side in human nature.

WUTHERING.

Her effect is to make one, if not sad, at least dissatisfied.

KATE.

She always expresses the ordinary thought.

WUTHERING.

Poor Sydney !

KATE.

By the by, do you like this gown ?

WUTHERING.

Somehow, it doesn't speak to me . . . yet.

KATE (*in agony*).

Oh, don't say that. What is wrong with it ?

WUTHERING.

I will write to you on the subject. I have, for the moment, but an impression—still inarticulate.

KATE.

I long for the letter. . . . All the same, meanwhile, could you decide whether you care for these new skirts ?

WUTHERING.

They may influence me beyond their merits. Give me time.

KATE.

Is it the colour ?

WUTHERING.

I cannot judge of colour in this mood (*plaintively*). I *used* to like mauve.

KATE.

Do you prefer, perhaps, a mauve with more pink about it ?

WUTHERING.

Don't press me to formulate the slight change in my feelings!

KATE.

But I am so anxious.

WUTHERING (*pressing her hand*).

This gives me a deeper experience of your helpfulness.

KATE.

Dear Ralph! It is because I never trouble you with the personal equation.

WUTHERING.

Possibly. A condition of enjoyment in the little things of life is—that one should be above the immediate conditions of time and place and person. (*He goes up stage and peers cautiously round.*)

KATE (*hanging on his words*).

Yes. . . .

WUTHERING.

Here come Ada and Aunt. I will go. It sickens me to hear conventional conversation after yours.

KATE (*with admiration*).

You are so *fine!*

WUTHERING.

You spoil me!

(*He goes out as* LADY CHALE *and* ADA *enter.*)

ADA.

Oh, what an excitement! (*To* KATE.) You don't know what you have missed.

LADY CHALE.

I was there and saw the whole thing. The girl was perfectly self-possessed until she caught sight of . . .

ADA.

Sydney!

LADY CHALE.

She took one look . . . and, as for him—my dear, he was ghastly!

KATE.

But how thrilling!

ADA.

We must find out what this means.

KATE.

It's too quaint! But who are you talking about?

ADA

Amabel East. Georgina is still with her in the boudoir. Let us go and see what we can make of her.

(*They all go off as* ST. ASAPH *and* APPLEFORD *enter.*)

APPLEFORD.

Now I hear that she is well, I must go. It would be outrageous to remain.

ST. ASAPH.

I think her agitation was a good sign—for you. She was sentimental—but not at all given to scenes.

APPLEFORD (*pacing the floor in agitation*).

I know that.

ST. ASAPH.

But the unexpectedness of the meeting would have tried any girl of nice feelings.

APPLEFORD.

And she—she is so sensitive.

ST. ASAPH.

I don't pretend to understand women, yet I cannot forget her words when she refused me. She said—"I have had but one love in my life, and that will live while I live."

APPLEFORD (*moved*).

Did she say that? It sounds very like her—a noble melancholy!

ST. ASAPH.

She must be a brick, too, in other ways. I had no idea that she and Georgina were such friends. Yet I am certain she has never given Georgina a hint of our old affair. Precious few women could have resisted a hint. Do you think I ought to tell Georgina myself?

APPLEFORD.

Why make her miserable for nothing, and spoil their friendship?

ST. ASAPH.

You are quite right. It would be idiotic.

APPLEFORD.

The most generous women are never reasonable in such matters.

ST. ASAPH.

No; my poor father used to say, "Beware of your wife when she listens to reason. It will mean that she is sick to death of you." (*Sighs.*) I wish all the same . . .

APPLEFORD.

But perversity is so charming.

ST. ASAPH.

Yes, yes, I know. . . . I am thinking of the possible time when I would rather be quiet than be charmed. That time does come.

APPLEFORD.

Don't meet trouble half-way!

ST. ASAPH.

That's the very thing to do, my poor fellow—meet it half-way and send it back! Therefore I will not encourage perversity in Georgina. But, as for Amabel, surely you intend to follow this up. (*Inclines his head toward the inner room.*) You won't lose the opportunity?

APPLEFORD.

It's awkward, all the same. You see, I did propose a week after I came into the property. She still refused. I have done quite enough to prove my affection.

ST. ASAPH.

Well, you haven't married.

APPLEFORD.

I won't say that I haven't considered several . . . ideas. There was one I met at Bayreuth. She was very *piquante.* But there was something lacking.

ST. ASAPH.

What?

APPLEFORD.

She talked too well.

ST. ASAPH.

That is most fatiguing!

APPLEFORD.

Then I met a young widow at Munich. Figure was the strong point there. She had a good walk.

ST. ASAPH.

Did that come to anything?

APPLEFORD.

We walked together in the woods about three hours every morning for a week. Once, when she stumbled over a log and caught hold of my arm, I fancied she was magnetic. Now that doesn't do.

ST. ASAPH.

Why not?

APPLEFORD.

Magnetism affects the judgment. Judgment is required in a historian. I left Munich that very afternoon. . . . No, Amabel has spoiled me for all others, and that's the plain fact.

ST. ASAPH.

Still, make one more attempt.

APPLEFORD.

Oh, I wouldn't mind any rebuff if I had the least hope. I can't see it.

ST. ASAPH.

How well you can manage a woman when you understand her, but no longer love her! Now she may imagine that you wished to give her old aunts the lie—and, as she's deuced proud . . .

APPLEFORD.

Oh, don't you think that every girl knows, by instinct, when a man is sincere? I had schooled myself to live without her. Now that I have seen her again, those years of discipline go for nothing. I can't be cured, and there's an end of it.

ST. ASAPH.

What is your next move?

APPLEFORD.

I shall go abroad.

ST. ASAPH.

You are playing the very devil with your career.

APPLEFORD.

I know myself. Nature ever takes her revenge if you fight her too hard. No, my one hope lies in wandering. I can't sit down and brood.

(FOOTMAN *enters announcing.*)

Mrs. Lynton and Mrs. Lupton Milles.

(MRS. LYNTON *and* MRS. LUPTON MILLES *enter.* FOOTMAN *goes out.*)

MRS. LYNTON.

Lord Appleford . . . and my dear Duke . . . (*Recovering*) My niece has sent for us. We are in the greatest anxiety. We leave for Russia to-morrow. Amabel never changes her plans.

APPLEFORD.

You leave to-morrow!

ST. ASAPH.

Will Miss East be well enough?

MRS. LYNTON.

She must be well enough. Where is she? Where is the child?

ST. ASAPH.

She is with my wife.

MRS. LYNTON.

Then take me to her at once. Fanny, you stay here. You know you always excite her.

(*She goes out with* ST. ASAPH.)

MRS LUPTON MILLES (*looking cautiously round*).

Lord Appleford, have you seen her?

APPLEFORD.

I was present when—when she fell.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

I have always been on your side. She is full of nonsense and wants a good shaking—nothing else in the world. The offers she has refused—the rubbish she talks! I have no patience with her. She has no heart.

APPLEFORD.

Sometimes I am driven to think so. I cannot understand her.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

One word. Will you come to our hotel — the Cosmopolitan—to-night? Ask for me. I can consult with you.

APPLEFORD.

But I would not risk giving her any annoyance.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Rely upon me. I must consult with you. I must.

APPLEFORD.

Very well.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

This illness may be worry. You remember her pride—it is majestic. If she knew that I had told you—she would kill me.

APPLEFORD.

You may depend upon me. I will be at your hotel to-night.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Come in an hour's time.

APPLEFORD.

Without fail.

(*Enter* ST. ASAPH.)

ST. ASAPH.

She is much better. She will come here in a few moments.

APPLEFORD.

Could I write a few letters in the library? I suppose you won't be going to the Merediths just yet?

ST. ASAPH.

The carriage has been ordered for twelve.

(APPLEFORD *bows and goes out.*)

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Isn't he a nice man? I don't know when I have seen a nicer. . . Oh, do use your influence with my niece.

ST. ASAPH.

In what way?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Make her see that it is her duty to marry Lord Appleford. The two are cut out for each other. Her lackadaisical ideas are just what he requires. They are so softening!

ST. ASAPH.

What you say is very good and very true in its way, but it isn't my business.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Oh, don't say that, my dear Duke. Nothing in this world is one's business—unless one makes it so.

ST. ASAPH.

What could I do?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

You could say a few words. Tell her that Appleford's career depends upon her love. That won't be true, I know, because men's careers seem to go on whether one loves them or whether one doesn't. But young women *do* like to think that they are important. It's very natural.

ST. ASAPH.

And very true, too. Besides, I have a conviction, myself, that Miss East would make Appleford the best of wives. I will do what I can for you—I will indeed. A man doesn't like to interfere in his friends' private affairs—particularly where a lady is in question, but in this case . . .

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

It would be a good work—a noble work. Thank you! thank you! And now may I go to Lord Appleford? I have a little more to say to him.

ST. ASAPH.

Certainly.

(*She goes out as* AMABEL *and* GEORGINA *enter.*)

AMABEL.

I thought my aunt was here.

ST. ASAPH.

She will be back directly. She is with Appleford . . .

AMABEL.

With Lord Appleford . . .

GEORGINA.

Oh, Sydney, will you get my ruby bracelet? I left it either in the billiard-room or on the piano. And will you tell Mrs. Lynton—who is with Aunt—that Amabel is waiting?

(ST. ASAPH *goes out reluctantly.*)

GEORGINA (*turning to* AMABEL).

I am sure you are unhappy, Amabel.

AMABEL.

But you, too, seem a little depressed.

GEORGINA.

I cannot understand men.

AMABEL.

Surely the Duke is frankness itself.

GEORGINA.

That isn't the difficulty.

AMABEL.

What then?

GEORGINA.

I am the difficulty. They tell me I shall bore him. What do you think? Would he endure me longer if I swore like Ada, painted like Kate, kicked as high as Lady

Diver, sang the songs of Mrs. Looter, wore the clothes of Nellie Dagenham, and betted like Laura de Trappe ?

AMABEL.

But these creatures are merely successful with other women's husbands.

GEORGINA.

Ah, Amabel, when you yourself are married, you will see the position more clearly.

AMABEL.

Haven't I told you that I refused the one man I ever loved ?

GEORGINA.

Why were you so stupid ?

AMABEL.

I listened to advice. I was just out of school. I knew no better.

GEORGINA.

Who was he, Amabel ?

AMABEL.

Don't ask me that. He would hate to have it known.

GEORGINA.

Was he handsome ?

AMABEL.

Better than handsome. He had genius.

GEORGINA (*disappointed*).

Oh, . . . I see.

AMABEL (*hastily*).

He didn't *look* like one, however.

GEORGINA (*cheerfully*).

I'm glad of that—for your sake.

AMABEL.

He dressed simply awfully well.

GEORGINA (*naïvely*)

Do other people call him a genius?

AMABEL.

You see, he isn't dead yet. He's very coming.

GEORGINA.

Then can't you make it up?

AMABEL.

Impossible, darling, impossible. He no longer loves me. The one feeling left is pity. And as for me—all I have left is pride.

GEORGINA.

Is there no chance of your meeting again?

AMABEL.

I hope not. Once I was everything to him. Now I should be an embarrassment. And now, here is the little

photograph you asked for. I was forgetting it. (*Gives her small photograph in gold case.*)

GEORGINA (*taking it*).

Oh, it is you! An excellent likeness. But rather sad. (*Puts it on table by her side.*)

AMABEL (*sighing*).

Think of me sometimes, won't you, dear Georgina?

GEORGINA.

I shan't be happy till you have made friends again with this—this handsome man (*checks off each phrase on her fingers*), who is also a genius, and also smart. Fancy! A *smart* genius. Oh, you *are* a lucky girl!

(ST. ASAPH *enters, looking curiously from one to the other.*)

ST. ASAPH.

I can't find the bracelet.

GEORGINA.

Don't tell me I have lost it. Your present—the one with the rubies. I must look myself . . . stay with Amabel. I must find it.

(*She goes out quickly.*)

AMABEL.

It is a great happiness to see that you are so fortunate in your marriage.

ST. ASAPH.

You are right. I am indeed fortunate, and so happy

that I am almost afraid to realise it. But you—Miss East, may I take a friend's privilege and tell you that . . . that . . .

AMABEL (*quickly*).

Wait. Are you about to speak of Lord Appleford?

ST. ASAPH.

Yes.

AMABEL.

Then spare yourself and me much grief. No doubt you have guessed—by my foolish emotion this evening—that he is the one whom I once told you . . . (*trying to laugh*). You remember Browning's lines. . . . "It once might have been, once only . . ." (*Dries her eyes*).

ST. ASAPH.

I must have some conversation with you—I must (*earnestly*). It concerns the welfare of the two friends I most care for in this world.

ADA (*from next room*).

I will find her.

AMABEL.

I am leaving for Russia early in the morning.

ST. ASAPH.

In the morning? I can't talk here. They might come in at any moment. May I call and see you to-night? My wife and I are going to a ball. I could get away for half an hour and call at your hotel. I must see you.

AMABEL (*puzzled*).

Why?

ST. ASAPH.

I can answer that when you have heard all I have to say.

AMABEL.

This is puzzling, but . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Surely you trust me ?

AMABEL.

Of course. I was not thinking of myself ; I was thinking of you. Does Georgina understand—does she know ?

ST. ASAPH.

She must never know. But, if she might know, she would understand perfectly.

AMABEL.

More and more mysterious. I will see you.

ST. ASAPH.

Very well. You may expect me about half-past twelve.

AMABEL.

Ask for my sitting-room, No. 61.

ST. ASAPH.

Thank you.

AMABEL.

Hush ! Who is that on the balcony ?

(MRS. WUTHERING *appears.*)

ST. ASAPH.

It is Ada.

AMABEL.

Did she hear ?

ST. ASAPH.

I don't know.

ADA (*coming down*).

Are you better, Miss East ?

AMABEL.

Thank you, I am much better. My aunts came for me, and now they seem to have disappeared.

ADA.

I met one a moment ago with Lord Appleford ; the other, I fancy, is with Lady Chale.

ST. ASAPH (*exchanging glances with* AMABEL).

She was in the hall, wasn't she ?

ADA (*innocently*).

Yes, at the foot of the stairs.

AMABEL.

Then I will meet her. Good-night, Duke.

ST. ASAPH.

I will take you to your carriage.

AMABEL.

Thank you. That is very kind.

(*They go out.*)

ADA (*calling*).

Ralph! (*He comes in.*) What do you say to this? Sydney has just made an appointment to call on Miss East at her hotel to-night.

WUTHERING.

Impossible!

ADA.

I heard him, by accident, with my own ears. I happened to come in the very nick of time. He said, "At half-past twelve." She said, "Ask for my sitting-room, No. 61." Miss East, I feel certain, is the brilliant girl with the impossible family we all heard about long ago.

WUTHERING.

I hope to God he won't get into a scandal! Just think how it would please all his friends!

(*Enter* LADY CHALE, BISTERN, *and* ROMNEY. WUTHERING *and* BISTERN *go to the back.*)

LADY CHALE.

Are you coming, Ada? The carriage is here. I must go for half an hour to the Merediths'. Why do really nice people give balls? One has to go.

ROMNEY.

I intend to walk.

ADA.

Send the carriage back for me. Georgina isn't quite ready.

LADY CHALE.

Very well.

(LADY CHALE *goes out with* ROMNEY. BISTERN *and* WUTHERING *come down.*)

BISTERN.

This is an awkward thing about Sydney, ain't it? (*He and* ADA *exchange a long glance.*) Ralph has just told me. But who would have thought, eh?

ADA.

For Heaven's sake, say nothing more. I must think of the right course to adopt.

WUTHERING.

Are you going to make a lot of mischief, Ada?

ADA.

I am going to use my judgment.

WUTHERING.

Then there is no hope for either of them!

ADA (*biting her lip*).

It is a mercy that I am not sensitive!

WUTHERING.

I don't mean to be disagreeable, Ada. You ought to know me by this time.

ADA.

Of course, I know you. But it is amusing to be surprised now and again !

WUTHERING.

If you hadn't such a sharp tongue !

ADA.

Can't you see that I am worried ?

(WUTHERING *moves away.*)

BISTERN.

Be very careful in all this, won't you ? It is never worth while to stir up comment.

ADA.

I must speak my mind.

BISTERN.

Don't do that. When one speaks one's mind, one is always certain to say something disagreeable.

ADA.

You needn't complain. I am never disagreeable to you. You understand me.

(KATE *and* WUTHERING *come down a little.*)

BISTERN (*in an agony*).

Not so loud !

(*He saunters away as* WUTHERING *comes down.*)

WUTHERING.

I can't see that you are worried.

ADA (*bitterly*).

But you never see anything! Sometimes I wonder if you even see *me*. The other day you were not sure about the colour of my eyes. You thought they were grey.

WUTHERING.

When one is sure of a woman one is able to consider the colour of her eyes, but if one doubts her heart one has no time to think about her face.

ADA (*pleased*).

Have you doubted my heart, Ralph?

WUTHERING.

Always.

ADA.

Perhaps I could explain. . . . No, I owe you much, but I owe my own pride more. You may doubt and doubt!

WUTHERING.

You make a grave mistake. Doubt in my mind soon becomes certainty one way or the other. I am no dreamer of dreams.

ADA.

One would think so—to hear you talk to Kate. You moon about together till people positively notice it!

WUTHERING.

You know perfectly well that mooning is not in my line. Kate thinks of nothing but her hats and gowns. Oh, how she bores me!

ADA.

Then why don't you tell her so?

WUTHERING.

Because she isn't my wife—that's why.

ADA

Exactly. . . . How I wish she could hear you! What a lesson!

WUTHERING.

If you would show this interest in me oftener. . . .

ADA.

Interest? You flatter yourself. It is merely criticism—*dispassionate* criticism. With all your faults, you are a man. I hate to see you make yourself *ridiculous.*

WUTHERING.

I wonder whether you are like this Miss East—playing a double sort of game. You women are so infernally sly!

ADA.

If you really cared . . .

WUTHERING.

Care ! You do not love me. It is clear that you have no wish to obey me, but you shall at least respect me.

(*He goes out.*)

(*Enter* KATE *very much agitated, followed by* BISTERN.)

KATE.

I feel so dreadfully upset. I sha'n't sleep to-night. My nerves are all on edge.

BISTERN.

Lying awake does no good. I make it a point never to lie awake.

KATE.

You have no soul, Tommie. It is so silly to be so silly as you are. Such flippancy !

BISTERN

I am not flippant, and I won't stand you saying that. I simply won't. You love to hurt my feelings.

KATE.

You see, *I* haven't Ada's *sweet* disposition ! I am sure the way you smiled at her at dinner—well !—I know she thinks you are madly in love with her.

BISTERN.

My dear, you are full of fancies. You think that every other woman sees me with your eyes !

KATE.

On the contrary—I wish they did !

BISTERN.

That's a most unwomanly—unwifelike remark.

KATE.

I didn't mean it—altogether. If you behaved as well as you look, you'd be an angel. But, as it happens—you are a trial.

BISTERN.

Whose fault is that?

KATE.

I believe you are every bit as deceitful as Sydney—I hate men! No, don't answer me. Men have no sense of justice! Don't follow me! (*She flounces out.*)

(APPLEFORD *enters.*)

BISTERN.

Isn't it a pity that such a pretty woman has such a tendency to . . . to . . . tantrums? (*He follows her out.*)

(ADA *enters from opposite side.*)

APPLEFORD.

Don't you think we ought to start now? Where's Sydney?

ADA.

Where's Sydney? Oh, my dear Appleford . . . My dear, dear Appleford! Men don't know each other in the least.

APPLEFORD.

We prefer to study you—not each other.

ADA.

Wait till you hear my news. You know Miss East?

APPLEFORD.

Yes.

ADA.

You know that St. Asaph once fell in love with some brilliant girl with an impossible family?

APPLEFORD.

We all do that.

ADA.

I suppose you do. Well, I have found out that Miss East *is* the woman.

APPLEFORD.

Indeed.

ADA.

And St. Asaph is going to see her to-night at her hotel at half-past twelve.

APPLEFORD.

How do you know that?

ADA.

Never mind. I do know it. Isn't it too disgraceful? And she pretends to be such friends with poor Georgina. And Georgina is so nice to her. Oh, it's horrid!

APPLEFORD.

So you think he is going to see her to-night at half-past twelve?

ADA.

I am sure of it.

APPLEFORD.

You will find that it is all right.

ADA.

Of course. But does it look well?

APPLEFORD.

You may depend that they do not realise that the meeting will be generally known. Are you coming with us to the Merediths'?

ADA.

I am waiting for Georgina. And I must put on my necklace.

(*She goes out.* WUTHERING *and* BISTERN *come down. The three men stand in a row.* WUTHERING *and* BISTERN *look most dejected.*)

BISTERN.

Don't go, Appleford.

APPLEFORD.

What is the matter?

WUTHERING.

I want to ask your opinion. I can't help thinking that Ada has made a mistake.

BISTERN.

Oh, St. Asaph may have been fond of the woman once, and it is the old, old story of one more long last Goodbye, etcetera, etcetera!

WUTHERING.

Never. That isn't his line at all. He knows the world too well. If it is anything, it is something devilish important. What do you think, Appleford?

APPLEFORD.

I think it's very natural.

WUTHERING.

Natural! To play the fool . . . already?

BISTERN.

Could there be any reason?

APPLEFORD.

Reason! A fool can give more reasons for his folly than a saint can urge for his wisdom. We have five senses, but only one conscience. That explains everything. The game is unequal.

BISTERN.

All the same, would you go in for this kind of thing?

APPLEFORD.

Well, if I really wanted to see a . . . lady, I should go and see her. I feel bound to admit that. I should go.

BISTERN.

If it comes to that, so should I.

WUTHERING.

Then why are we pitching into St. Asaph?

APPLEFORD.

Perhaps, because none of you are, for the moment, sufficiently anxious to see any particular lady. You are not in sympathy with recklessness.

BISTERN.

Take care. Here *is* St. Asaph now. We might sound him a bit. Let us say things and watch his face.

WUTHERING.

We might take a confidential line and appear to give ourselves away. This will lead him on. It is only friendly to get at the truth and save him from himself.

BISTERN.

That's right. We must save him from himself.

(*Enter* ST. ASAPH *preoccupied.*)

BISTERN.

We were just talking about Miss East. A pretty lady . . .

ST. ASAPH.

She has got a great deal of character too. Existence must be dreadful with her old aunties!

APPLEFORD.

Women are better than men at this game of resignation.

BISTERN.

I suppose so. I can't understand it.

APPLEFORD (*watching* ST. ASAPH).

Say, you want a thing. You can't get it. Then you try to believe that it is not worth having. You pitch mud all

day at the best hope of your life. Is that philosophy? No wonder philosophers are mostly snarling or soured.

ST. ASAPH.

If I want a thing, I want it, and no one can persuade me against it. That's *my* way.

APPLEFORD.

But one has to guard against mistakes.

ST. ASAPH.

Not a bit of it. Risk mistakes. Take your chance—or even the odd chance. Too much caution is killing us all.

WUTHERING.

That was what I thought when I married.

APPLEFORD.

What then?

WUTHERING.

Ada merely sulks. And why shouldn't she be contented? She looks well, she understands food, and no one has a finer lot of emeralds.

ST. ASAPH (*sarcastically*).

What more could she desire?

BISTERN.

You can laugh, but all the same, Ralph has done his best for her. He was ambitious till he married. Then he gave up his interest in everything.

WUTHERING (*bitterly.*)

If you once fall in love you are lost. Goodbye to your career and your future.

ST. ASAPH.

Still a nice high-class woman can make a great difference.

BISTERN.

You must keep your head cool, that's all, and choose the one you like next best.

ST. ASAPH.

You cannot expect to find contentment in one interest only—whether it be love, or politics, or any other thing. The mind must spread about a bit, you know.

APPLEFORD.

Spread about a bit!

BISTERN.

Ralph does not know how to influence his wife. He is too candid.

ST. ASAPH.

In what way, Bistern?

BISTERN.

Take my case. How do I manage Kate? If I wish her to do anything I urge every argument against it. This answers perfectly.

ST. ASAPH.

Does she ever get jealous?

BISTERN.

Her jealousy is appalling.

ST. ASAPH.

It is never worth while to make a woman jealous.

BISTERN.

Ah ! but suppose she finds you out !

ST. ASAPH.

Find *you* out, Tommie—as if she could—you dog

WUTHERING.

When I show the least interest in Ada, she becomes impossible. I pretend that she bores me to death.

ST. ASAPH.

This commands her respect. If she once suspected that you would sooner be with her than any other woman, you could do nothing with her. But there ought to be more confidence between husband and wife. A little talk might put it all right.

BISTERN.

Yes, but what can you tell 'em? They never understand.

WUTHERING.

I never talk to my wife about *myself*, but I tell her everything I hear about other people.

ST. ASAPH.

The trouble is that you and Ada are never natural. A girl may dance beautifully, she may be handsome, she may have a good figure, she may be plain, rich, poor, but she *must* be in sympathy with you.

WUTHERING (*gloomily*).

What is sympathy?

ST. ASAPH.

Being bored by the same things would come pretty near it, in your case. Well, after all, hopeless love makes all the gaiety of the world!

APPLEFORD.

I thought that marriage had cured your cynicism.

ST. ASAPH.

So it has. But if all lovers were happy, every couple would be wishing the rest out of the way! Two happy beings always want the whole earth to themselves. On the other hand, three unhappy people—even three—can keep the whole of London thoroughly entertained!

BISTERN.

But one doesn't want these three people to be one's own relatives.

ST. ASAPH.

I don't think that either of you understand women in the least. (*He points to* WUTHERING *and* BISTERN.)

BISTERN.

Do you mean to say . . .

WUTHERING.

That we . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Yes, I do mean it. You are wrong—both of you.

BISTERN.

My dear Sydney!

ST. ASAPH.

You are wrong. You see, a woman is like the quail—a little uncertain—that's all.

WUTHERING.

But I am devoted to my wife, of course.

BISTERN.

We are all devoted to our wives.

APPLEFORD.

So far as I can make out, one marries, nowadays, chiefly to please other people!

WUTHERING.

Well, I married to please myself.

ST. ASAPH.

We are all taking the selfish view, aren't we?

BISTERN.

The riddle of the age is for each man the same,—"What is the best thing I can do with my life?"

APPLEFORD.

It don't seem very inspiring. What about the woman's life?

ST. ASAPH.

She won't let you forget it. Don't be nervous.

(*Enter* FOOTMAN *with a card, which he gives to* ST. ASAPH.)

ST. ASAPH.

Hullo! this from Bradgers—De Lisle Bradgers! He asks for the favour of an interview.

WUTHERING.

Why De Lisle?

ST. ASAPH.

Because he is, as he would say, the result of a hushed-up scandal in the very best society!

BISTERN.

Fancy Bradgers! You can't refuse. This means something important. By Gad! he intends to run you.

ST. ASAPH.

I can't be uncivil, because I really like him. He is most amusing. I'll bring him up.

(*He goes up to meet* BRADGERS *as* FOOTMAN *goes out.* APPLEFORD *picks up a paper and reads it.* WUTHERING *and* BISTERN *come down.*)

WUTHERING.

What do you think ?

BISTERN.

I can't make him out. Give it up, my boy.

WUTHERING (*quoting* ST. ASAPH).

"The mind must spread about a bit." "One interest in life ain't enough."

BISTERN.

That's what it comes to. Are you goin' to the Merediths' ?

WUTHERING.

We can just toddle round for supper. I hope the quails will be hot. I hate cold quails.

(*They go out as* FOOTMAN *enters announcing* MR. BRADGERS.)

(*Enter* BRADGERS.)

BRADGERS (*casually*).

I thought I might as well follow you up. (*Seats himself.*) Your carriage is at the door. Surely you are not going to the Merediths' ball.

ST. ASAPH (*meekly*).

I had some idea of it.

BRADGERS.

Give it up. Men who dance have no future. Should I be where I am to-day, if I had been a dancing man ? I tell you, Duke, the country demands self-sacrifice. We must live like our Puritan fathers. We must say to the

idols of to-day, "Out-talk us, out-vote us, shout us down, but we are the army of sober men to come." I want to hear you talk a little in this vein. Be the leader of the healthy party. By the by, can you tell me anything about Lord Appleford?

APPLEFORD (*interrupting, and motioning the Duke to keep quiet*).

I know a little about him.

BRADGERS.

I made Appleford. Appleford, till I brought him to the public notice, was never heard of.

ST. ASAPH.

I can quite believe it.

BRADGERS.

And I haven't done with him yet. I intend to use him as a vehicle for my ideas.

APPLEFORD.

Is he agreeable to this plan?

BRADGERS.

Agreeable! He will jump at it!

ST. ASAPH.

Have you ever met him?

BRADGERS.

I am to meet him next week. I never judge a man but out of his own mouth.

APPLEFORD.

That's one of my principles too.

BRADGERS.

But I have formed a mental picture of Appleford. He will answer my purpose. We live in an age of democratic equality, but the slow intellectual movement of the masses is such that they still demand a peer—merely, in a vulgar phrase, "for the look of the thing."

ST. ASAPH.

Yet, as you were saying, those who have pledged themselves *not* to talk have been made to talk. The interests of one class clash against the interests of another, but in the great result the people always mean right, and in the end they will have the right. (BRADGERS *tries to get a word in.*) *And*, as you were saying so admirably, we must turn our eyes from institutions to men. The penny pamphlet does more to govern this country than the House of Commons. People can never be made to stay and argue a long question. They must be made to feel it through the hides of their idols. Let the *Times* say, "This is madness." The penny pamphlet, edited by Lord Appleford, will reply, "What is defeat? Nothing but education—nothing but the first step to something better."

BRADGERS (*delighted*).

It's really very good—uncommonly good. Where did I say that? Can you remember the occasion?

ST. ASAPH.

I cannot tell. It is a mental picture of the kind—the kind of thing Appleford might have managed under your immediate inspiration.

BRADGERS.

Appleford! Never! Those words, those ideas are my own—absolutely my own. You cannot know Appleford, if you think he could rise to such truths under *any one's* inspiration.

ST. ASAPH.

But, Mr. Bradgers . . .

APPLEFORD (*good-naturedly*).

Mr. Bradgers may be right. Has he not told us that he has never met Appleford?

BRADGERS.

A man cannot get above the atmosphere in which he was born. Appleford is a hothouse plant. Why is he a mere mouthpiece? Who can tell? The Duke can't: he says he knows nothing about him.

ST. ASAPH.

Excuse me . . . I . . .

BRADGERS (*to* APPLEFORD).

You can't, for you know nothing about him. *I* can, because I know everything about him. Why off his *own* bat, he couldn't say "boo" to a goose. (*Growing confidential.*) He's a little man.

APPLEFORD.

Oh, he's little, is he?

BRADGERS.

Yes, a quiet, bald, gentle, little chap. My brother went to school with him.

APPLEFORD.

Quite a coincidence!

BRADGERS.

At least, my brother remembers a sickly boy called Morpen, who was considered clever, and Morpen, you know, is the family name of the Applefords (*confidentially*). Now shall I tell you the chief danger in Appleford's career?

ST. ASAPH.

Do.

BRADGERS.

He speaks too plainly. This was well enough to begin with, but I hope he won't keep it up.

ST. ASAPH.

You mean political reputations are made by saying what

you think, and they are kept by saying what you don't think !

BRADGERS.

You put it cynically—but . . .

ST. ASAPH.

That's mere manner !

BRADGERS (*picking up portrait of* MISS EAST).

Hullo ! This is the beautiful Amabel East, daughter of East and Holkers'. I know her aunt, Mrs. Lupton Milles.

APPLEFORD.

Indeed.

BRADGERS.

They go into very good society nowadays : one meets them at the best houses. But Amabel won't marry. Her aunt, a delightful person, tells me that she has refused at least one prince—and often more—of every nationality.

APPLEFORD (*taking photograph*).

I wonder why !

BRADGERS.

An early attachment.

ST. ASAPH.

Does that seem reasonable ?

BRADGERS.

Her aunts think her mad on the subject. It seems she fell in love, some years ago, with this very man we have been speaking of—Appleford.

APPLEFORD.

No !

BRADGERS.

Yes, my dear fellow, yes. Just imagine—a handsome young woman, with *her* money, going " dottie " on a little, musty, dried-up, stick-in-the-mud like Appleford !

APPLEFORD.

Inconceivable !

BRADGERS.

Appleford, of all men. Why, they tell me he is as blind as a bat from over-work, and where his heart ought to be there is a Byzantine Mosaic ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! I am going to call on Mrs. Lupton Milles this evening. What a nice woman ! She gives perfect little dinners—such mutton and the best claret in the world. I say to her, " Yes, I will dine with you, but give me something plain. A joint, a bird, a rice pudding." But now, Duke, can I have a few moments' private conversation ?

APPLEFORD.

I have to write some letters, but if at any time I can be of service to you, Mr. Bradgers, in your noble propaganda, pray command me.

BRADGERS.

That's very sweet of you !

(APPLEFORD *goes out.*)

BRADGERS.

An intelligent person, that. Your secretary, I presume ?

ST. ASAPH.

He's a friend of mine . . . a . . . a journalist, in fact—he writes leading articles and essays for the learned reviews.

BRADGERS.

Ah, I'm rather sorry to hear it. The taint of journalism must corrupt one in time, and he has an open face—a very open face. The Press will be the ruin of this country.

ST. ASAPH.

I don't agree. When Appleford and I left Oxford, we both wrote for the Press, and we thought ourselves tremendous swells when our stuff was accepted. What is more, I have just undertaken to write a series of articles on *Labour* for the *Daily News*.

BRADGERS.

Leave newspapers alone! *I* can give you a better opportunity than any of 'em.

ST. ASAPH.

I wasn't thinking of opportunities. I thought it might do good—don't you know.

BRADGERS.

Nothing ever does any *good*, so far as that goes.

ST. ASAPH.

Then, I suppose, one must just do as much *harm* as one can!

BRADGERS.

Very ready! I delight in your peculiar humour. I wish you would write a Preface for my "Laws of Honour" pamphlet.

ST. ASAPH.

O, I haven't an idea.

BRADGERS (*earnestly*).

That's why I want you.

ST. ASAPH.

O, come! Your humour is about as peculiar as mine!

BRADGERS.

The drawing-room, Duke, is no place for seriousness. Who could think of his higher self in such surroundings?

ST. ASAPH.

Will you come down to the library? There are lots of marble busts of fellows all round the walls. It's awfully depressing—and nice for work!

BRADGERS (*surveying the room*).

This luxury, Duke, is most insidious. It makes one oblivious of the crying needs of the nation. (*Leading.*) *This* way?

ST. ASAPH.

Yes, that way.

(*They go off as* GEORGINA *and* ADA *enter.*)

GEORGINA.

Where is Sydney?

ADA.

Sydney is in the library with this Bradgers person.

GEORGINA.

We shall be very late. Perhaps you had better go on.

ADA.

I prefer to stay here with you. That's a sweet gown . . . too darling. . . . What a shade !

GEORGINA.

It is Sydney's favourite frock.

ADA (*sighing*).

Ah, my dear, I hope you will never allow any one human being in particular . . . to become indispensable to your happiness.

GEORGINA (*serenely*).

No, no one, except Sydney.

ADA.

When will you be a woman of the world ? Now, let us consider Sydney calmly. He is rich, young, pleasant, sought after . . .

GEORGINA.

And a married man.

ADA.

Yes . . . we'll come to that later. He must have met a great many women before he finally decided to make you his Duchess.

GEORGINA.

His wife.

ADA.

Better say Duchess . . . it sounds more permanent! Now, own, he must have had several love affairs.

GEORGINA.

But we needn't talk about them.

ADA.

I must.

GEORGINA (*puzzled*).

You must?

ADA.

I have something to tell you . . . very difficult . . . you must be prepared to show all your spirit, your good sense, your pride. . . . After all, very pretty women can laugh at little . . . disloyalties . . . which would drive a plain one to despair. Did you know . . . did you ever hear that Sydney was once rather fond of Miss East?

GEORGINA.

Amabel! She said something . . . not much . . . they had met once or twice. I didn't think . . . (*seizing her arm*). Oh, what are you trying to say? He has no secrets from me . . . not one . . . *I* could explain—*he* would not have to explain . . . I know his whole life . . .

ADA.

I am sure of that . . . that is why I refer to it. . . . But, all the same, why should she have fainted when she saw him this evening? One doesn't do that just out of a little friendship! I feel it my duty to tell you that he has an appointment with Miss East to-night at her hotel. I know this for a fact.

GEORGINA (*rising*).

Is that all you have to tell me . . . because . . . (*she goes up stage and staggers a little*).

ADA (*taking her arm*).

You are a brave girl! I am proud of you. You are splendid. He doesn't deserve you. But he'll be sorry . . . he will be very miserable . . . he will beg your forgiveness.

GEORGINA (*fiercely*).

There is nothing to forgive—nothing—absolutely nothing. And you are lying to me—lying!

ADA.

I am not. And after this insult, I must insist on your proving my words.

GEORGINA.

How can I?

ADA.

Will you come to the hotel with me to-night—Room 61, at 12.30? Will you come? Would you dare? We can manage it. What more natural than to call and inquire about her health—after that stupid fainting fit?

GEORGINA.

I cannot do it.

ADA.

Because you know I am right. But you owe it to me now. It is only fair after your cruel words—your insult. As if I would make mischief except from the highest motives. I want you to save Sydney from a designing little cat.

GEORGINA.

She is not a cat !

ADA.

Then why does she ask your husband to call on her at midnight ? Not that *you* could be jealous of Amabel East.

GEORGINA.

I have no cause for jealousy.

ADA.

You may depend that *she* made all the advances.

GEORGINA (*indignant*).

Sydney is not a muff, my dear Ada !

ADA.

Good Heavens ! I know that.

GEORGINA.

If Sydney chose to make love to a woman, *I* couldn't entirely blame the . . . woman for believing him. Didn't *I* believe in him ?

ADA.

You had a right to believe in him ! Who could doubt a man who proposed to one *before* breakfast, and in the autumn, too ! Still . . .

GEORGINA.

Well ?

ADA.

Do you know what people say ?

GEORGINA.

No, and I don't care. . . . What do they say ?

ADA.

You see, you *do* care . . . that is all I wanted to find out.

Enter FOOTMAN *with a note for* GEORGINA, *he gives it to her and goes out.*)

GEORGINA (*looking at the note*).

Read it for me. It is from Lord Malisbury.

ADA (*reading*).

MY DEAR GEORGINA,—*Beyond a doubt, we shall manage the Secretaryship. Sydney is the very man for us . . . he is so staunch, enthusiastic, and reliable.*

Yours very sincerely,

MALISBURY.

GEORGINA (*mechanically*).

An appointment for Sydney. He is to take Twamerville's place.

ADA.

What fools men are ! What blind, mad fools ! Imagine the effect of gossip at this particular moment. If a hint of this should get into the papers, Sydney's career will be ruined. A career may end in a scandal, but it can never, never begin with one. In England the start is more important than the finish.

GEORGINA.

How dare you speak of a scandal—a scandal in connection with Sydney ! You are quite mistaken. It cannot be. I know my husband—I know his nature. It cannot be. I know Amabel also.

ADA.

My dear, men surprise *themselves*. Besides, the women who succeed with men are either very sentimental or very silly ! Now, be silly or sentimental, but tell me what you mean to do. There is no time to be lost. This is a case for dash. Be as civil as possible, but there must be dash. What then do you mean to do ?

GEORGINA.

I must think.

ADA.

That is not enough. You must deny it, we must all deny it, or, before to-morrow night, Sydney's madness will be the talk of London. Nothing of this kind can be kept secret for more than one night. Your name and his will be in every one's mouth, laughed at by some, pitied by others—the gazing-stock of all.

GEORGINA (*agitated*).

I must think.

ADA (*seizing her wrist*).

Do you hear? Do you care? Do you understand?

GEORGINA.

Do I hear? *Yes!* Do I care? *Yes!* Do I fear? *No!* Do I doubt Sydney? *No!*

ADA.

Oh, these moments! Don't I know them? You murmur a prayer, think of hell, and long for heaven. What women go through!

GEORGINA.

I was never more calm.

ADA (*with admiration*).

This is no ordinary love!

GEORGINA.

I hope not.

ADA.

This is a matter of the soul! My poor child, Sydney does not deserve you.

GEORGINA.

I know his faults, but I can forgive them all, so long as he loves me.

ADA.

So long, and a little longer . . . if you are wise! But wait! Let me peep over the staircase. (*She looks out.*) Here's Bertram!

(ROMNEY *enters.*)

ROMNEY.

Where is Sydney?

GEORGINA.

He is with Mr. Bradgers.

ROMNEY.

Oh, I'm so sick of the Merediths' brass band. It has been braying at me for the last hour. Do play something tremendous from Wagner, Ada. (*Ada goes into next room and plays.*)

GEORGINA.

You don't seem in good spirits, Bertram.

ROMNEY.

I feel unhappy—for some reason—to the depths of my soul.

GEORGINA (*gaily*)

When a very young man is very unhappy—one knows what to think.

ROMNEY.

There was a girl at the ball who looked—ever so little—like you. But she kept whirling past me—always with some one else—and she only made me remember how hopeless everything is and must be.

GEORGINA.

Is this how you amuse me?

ROMNEY (*dropping his voice*).

May I speak out? I came because . . . because I felt . . . I heard that you were in trouble. I couldn't stay away. You don't mind?

GEORGINA.

Who said that I was in trouble?

ROMNEY.

Bistern told me.

GEORGINA.

I am in no trouble. I wonder what he meant.

ROMNEY.

But I can see there is something. Who don't you trust me? Perhaps I could advise you . . . perhaps . . .

GEORGINA.

You see, dear Bertram, I am not a schoolgirl now. I am married.

ROMNEY.

Then you have all the greater need for counsel—for sympathy—you are so young and innocent. You might be deceived in many ways.

GEORGINA.

If I am ever so unfortunate as to be deceived, I know that I shall never be so weak as to require consolation to slow music.

ROMNEY.

Georgina, you trample on the finest shades of feeling !

GEORGINA.

I have no more to add.

ROMNEY.

After our long friendship . . .

GEORGINA.

You have killed it.

ROMNEY.

What have I said ?

GEORGINA.

What have you *thought ?*

ROMNEY (*dropping his eyes*).

You will live to regret this . . . this injustice !

GEORGINA (*with a quick glance*).

Are you sure of that ?

ROMNEY.

Before Heaven ! . . . You have me at a disadvantage !

GEORGINA.

Did you not hope that it might have been the other way about ?

ROMNEY.

I dare not trust myself to answer you.

GEORGINA.

I think you have already trusted yourself too far !

ROMNEY.

This ends it. Good-night.

GEORGINA (*going to door*).

Goodbye ! Ada, you may stop playing, Bertram has to go now.

ROMNEY (*holding out his hand*).

Good-night.

GEORGINA

Goodbye !

ROMNEY.

Goodbye, then. I suppose it is for ever. In fact, I'm only miserable when I see you. And—don't write—but the old address—in Jermyn Street—will always find me.

(*He bows low and goes toward door as* ST. ASAPH *enters.*)

ST. ASAPH (*slapping him on the back*).

Ah, Romney, have you been breaking hearts the whole evening? We married men have no show against such gay deceivers ! What do you think, Georgina ?

ROMNEY (*bitterly*).

One must find a heart before one can break it ! (*He goes out.*)

ST. ASAPH.

H'm—a pathetic, weary-eyed, little boy, that ! Not a bad sort, but a trifle depressing. Did they tell you that I was with Bradgers ?

GEORGINA.

Yes.

ST. ASAPH.

He has asked me to write the preface for his new pamphlet, "The Laws of Honour."

GEORGINA.

Will you do it?

ST. ASAPH.

I intend to try.

GEORGINA.

That's splendid! Won't they call this coming on very very fast?

ST. ASAPH.

I must get the thing finished for the printers before two o'clock. I must take black coffee. . . . Are you tired? I find other people's home circles rather boring, don't you?

GEORGINA.

But aren't you coming to the ball?

ST. ASAPH.

Darling, I can't.

GEORGINA.

Shall I stay at home with you?

ST. ASAPH (*embarrassed.*)

I should love it, but . . . don't you think they rather expect you?

GEORGINA.

Perhaps. . . . Do you want me to go ?

ST. ASAPH.

For an hour, at any rate.

GEORGINA.

What do you think of Amabel ?

ST. ASAPH.

Charming ! One would take to her.

GEORGINA.

She is handsome.

ST. ASAPH.

And pleasant.

GEORGINA.

I often wonder whether she had some disappointment in love. Did you know her very well—long ago ?

ST. ASAPH.

I admired her very much.

GEORGINA (*bluntly*).

Did you ever think of asking her to marry you ?

ST. ASAPH.

I was at the age when you think of marrying the girl you are *about* to meet. I used to go to balls and say, "Perhaps I shall meet her—*the one*—at last !" Wherever I went I looked for the face that could haunt me for ever,

and make me write poetry, and fight duels, and become famous! That sort of thing! I was a young ass! I made no end of mistakes.

GEORGINA.

Did you make a mistake about me?

ST. ASAPH.

Darling! I knew that I loved you straight off, in dead earnest.

GEORGINA.

How?

ST. ASAPH.

Because I didn't want to run after you. I wanted to run away. That's the first impulse of a wise man in love.

GEORGINA.

Men argue strangely.

ST. ASAPH.

It's an awful moment when a fellow knows that he is taken—body and soul. He's bound to fight a bit at first. I fought.

GEORGINA.

Against me?

ST. ASAPH.

You see, real love is a serious thing. If you try to beat it, every scene becomes a torment; your friends grow tedious, your life goes all to pieces, you get moody, and you generally want to die.

GEORGINA.

You know a great deal about it?

ST. ASAPH.

Yes, I do—one way and another. I am deuced sentimental, you know. People don't guess it, but I am . . .

GEORGINA.

One way and another ! Sydney, have you ever doubted any one you loved ? Have you ever felt as though your heart were being stoned ? Have you ever felt your head spinning, and the ground slipping away under your feet ?

ST. ASAPH.

No ! because I couldn't love any one whom I doubted.

GEORGINA.

I am afraid . . . I could . . .

ST. ASAPH.

It is not to be imagined—yet (*with an inspiration*), suppose I doubted *you ?*

GEORGINA.

Yes !

ST. ASAPH.

I should say—if I could once look her well in the eyes—a long look—so . . . (*he takes her face in his hands*). I should know everything. (*He seems nevertheless a little mystified by her expression.*) Wouldn't I be right ?

GEORGINA.

I hope so.

ST. ASAPH.

You hope so! *I* am sure of it.

GEORGINA.

Men are weak with the women they love, because they can always depend on the one who loves them. (*Clock chimes.*)

ST. ASAPH (*puzzled*).

I forgot—Bradgers is waiting for me all this time. Shall I send him away?

GEORGINA.

No, no! Your career. And the preface—the preface for "The Laws of Honour" pamphlet.

ST. ASAPH (*going off*).

Oh, yes! that beastly preface. . . I shall feel such a prig —such an impostor. One does, for some reason, when one begins to jaw on the abstract virtues.

GEORGINA.

Yes! one does. . . . Sydney!

ST. ASAPH.

Yes.

GEORGINA.

I know that I am not a woman of your world. I must seem a fool in comparison with these others. They are all so wise . . . so brilliant. . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Nonsense! They are only clever*ish* and smart*ish*. I don't take any stock in 'em.

GEORGINA.

Sydney, we need all our courage.

ST. ASAPH (*gravely*).

The only courage I need is—the courage to love you less.

GEORGINA.

Ah, you can *say* things! (*Steadily*) I was very peaceful as a girl. I loved music. I liked to dance. I liked to drive and ride and swim. I read Sir Walter Scott. I learnt Irregular Verbs, and I used to draw flowers. And then—I met you!

ST. ASAPH.

Thank God!

GEORGINA.

I read no more Sir Walter Scott; I drew no more flowers, and I forgot all that I had ever learnt about Irregular Verbs!

ST. ASAPH.

What a mercy!

GEORGINA.

Now, what have I done to you that you should come into my life, change all my tastes, take all my thoughts, my hopes, my fears, my joys, my very heart, my very soul and make me wretched? Did I call you? Did I ask for you? No, you came to me. You talked to me. You

understood me. You seemed to care for me . . . you married me. . . . And now . . .

ST. ASAPH.

You say I have made you wretched?

GEORGINA.

You have made me everything except the one thing I must be.

ST. ASAPH.

What is that?

GEORGINA.

Your friend. . . . You tell me I am pretty and amiable, and so on. . . . I am glad you think so . . . very glad. You give me your name, your protection, your compliments, your family jewels, and your family history. But you give your confidence elsewhere. . . .

ST. ASAPH.

What has gone wrong? Every word I have heard this evening has been a sting—or a stab. We came here believing in ourselves and in each other. I knew we were not perfect, but I thought we were, on the whole, all right. I can think of our walks through the woods, of the flowers, the sunlight, the singing of the birds, but I have already forgotten—or else I dare not remember—how happy we were!

GEORGINA.

The love which does not suffer and which cannot speak is but a dream—perhaps. And love which is constant is but a lie—perhaps.

ST. ASAPH.

Constancy—a lie !

GEORGINA.

Oh, don't you hate people who attack your friends ? What do you say to them ?

ST. ASAPH.

I call them liars—which they probably consider a compliment !

GEORGINA.

But suppose there is a grain of truth in their stories ?

ST. ASAPH.

In that case, I call them damnable liars !

GEORGINA.

Oh, that is like you ! Go now, go ! You must write the preface.

ST. ASAPH.

You mustn't make it too hard for me to leave you. I hate going ; you know that. If I want to get on it is only to please you. It is, really !

(ST. ASAPH *kisses her and goes out.*)

GEORGINA (*looking after him, falls sobbing in a chair*).

Oh, I am alone in the world—alone !

(ADA *rushes in.*)

ADA.

Darling Georgina ! I am so sorry for you, but we must start now. And you owe it to me to call at Miss East's, Room 61, at half-past twelve.

GEORGINA (*with defiance*).

I still *know* that you are wrong.

ADA.

We shall see !

GEORGINA.

And if you *are* wrong, Ada, what then ?

ADA.

But if I am right ?

(*She drags* GEORGINA *after her and they go out.*)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE: *The Louis Seize suite at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, Pall Mall* AMABEL *and* PENNINGTON, *her maid.*

PENNINGTON.

You are looking yourself again, now.

AMABEL.

I need rest, Pennington. I want to get away from London and dream and think.

PENNINGTON.

Oh no, you don't want to think. There is nothing worse. You must be bright and drink champagne, and row on the river, and enjoy life while you are young.

AMABEL.

Enjoy life !

PENNINGTON.

You shouldn't give way to such feelings. It's not in the movement. It's such a miserable way of going on.

AMABEL (*with indignation*).

I like to be miserable !

PENNINGTON.

Have you heard that Lord Appleford is in London? Sometimes I hope that you and he may come together again.

AMABEL.

You don't understand, Pennington, how impossible that is. If we should ever meet again, it would be as friends—friends only.

(*She sails out with the "History of Byzantine Mosaics" under her arm. Enter* MRS. LUPTON MILLES.)

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Is Miss Amabel better?

PENNINGTON.

She has put on her new tea-gown and she is reading that everlasting *History of Byzantine Mosaics.*

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

She saw Lord Appleford at Chale House. He loves her more madly than ever.

PENNINGTON.

You used to think he loved her money. I didn't.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Hold your tongue! He is very rich now himself and the case is altered.

PENNINGTON.

And how well it sounds! Mrs. Lupton Milles's niece—

Lady Appleford. Oh, it does sound well! I believe she worships him.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Why?

PENNINGTON.

She never speaks of him.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

That does not prove much.

PENNINGTON.

But whenever I talk of the old days when they were so happy in Rome and read poetry together, and visited monuments, she always has a good cry and gives me a silk foundation. I've had three silk foundations this week—as good as new.

(*A* WAITER *enters with a card on a tray.*)

PENNINGTON (*reading card as she hands it*).

Good gracious!

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Mr. De Lisle Bradgers! (*To* WAITER.) Ask the gentleman to come in. (WAITER *goes out.*) Go to Miss Amabel and keep her occupied.

(PENNINGTON *goes out as* BRADGERS *enters.*)

BRADGERS.

How are you, my dear friend, how are you?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Oh, about the same, and you ?

BRADGERS.

I've been over-working ; I ought not to be out. But I was calling on Sydney St. Asaph—the Duke, you know—this evening : he mentioned that you were in town for one night only. I said, " I must see her," and here I am.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Do sit down.

BRADGERS (*seating himself*).

You mustn't go to Russia. Why go to Russia ? Horrid place—so draughty.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

It is Amabel's wish.

BRADGERS.

You need a man—with a firm will—in this family.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

To tell the truth, I am getting rather tired of being dragged about by this capricious girl. Where do *I* come in ? I ask myself.

BRADGERS.

A very sensible reflection. One can't make it too often in this selfish world.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Amabel ought to marry.

BRADGERS.

A little bird told me that she once liked Maurice Appleford ! Is that true ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*coyly*).

How can you ask a woman to betray the secrets of another woman's heart ?

BRADGERS.

I'll say no more.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

But what else did the little bird say ?

BRADGERS.

Well, little birds always tell long stories !

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Oh, you witty creature ! Literary men are too charming !

BRADGERS.

I am but a poor Grub Street garreteer—nothing more.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*alarmed*).

Oh, don't say that ! In the old days, Lord Appleford used to call himself a Grub Street garreteer. . . . There ! I have let the cat out of the bag.

BRADGERS.

Ah, then the Appleford story is true ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Since you ask me—yes. She was infatuated. So was he. We didn't know what to think.

BRADGERS.

What could she see in him ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Oh, he was considered a handsome man. I prefer a more rugged style myself—something strenuous and uncommon, but silly girls—well, you know what girls are !

BRADGERS.

I was always given to understand that he was a wretched little man. . . .

(WAITER *enters with a card which he hands to* MRS. LUPTON MILLES.)

MRS. LUPTON MILLES (*handing card to* BRADGERS).

Here he is. (*To* WAITER.) Show the gentleman in.

(WAITER *goes out.*)

BRADGERS (*reading*).

Lord Appleford. What a coincidence ! I have been wanting to meet him. (*Puts card in case.*)

(APPLEFORD *enters. He does not perceive* BRADGERS.)

BRADGERS (*at back*).

Good Lord ! The secretary ! . . (*Steals away on tiptoe till he reaches the door.*)

APPLEFORD.

Is she better ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Better, much better . . . but let me introduce you . . . (*Looks round.*) Mr. Bradgers. . . .

BRADGERS (*at the door*).

Another time ! another time ! I won't intrude.

(*He bolts.*)

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

How extraordinary !

APPLEFORD.

Did I catch the name of Bradgers ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Certainly, but I am afraid he was taken ill.

APPLEFORD (*smiling*).

I daresay he caught *my* name.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

But he was so anxious to meet you.

APPLEFORD.

I can explain the matter another time . . . But tell me, does Amabel know that you asked me to come here ? Because this intrusion is not . . . Well, I leave you to fill in the rest . . . Does Amabel know that you expect me ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

She does not.

APPLEFORD.

Is that the truth ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

On my word of honour. Alas ! poor darling, how she adored you ! how she idolised you !

APPLEFORD.

I can't think that.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

I may not always be able to look after the poor child. Things happen. . . . One marries. . . . I wake in the night shaking and shivering at the thought of Amabel alone in the world with my sister Sarah.

APPLEFORD.

Where is Sarah now ?

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

In bed with ice on her temples ! She may be a woman for a crisis—but we have to know it for weeks afterwards !

APPLEFORD.

Why didn't you say these things long ago ? But you made Amabel suspicious, distrustful. . . .

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

I had to observe reasonable caution. Could I permit my niece—a mere schoolgirl—to tie herself for life to a poor and idle young man ?

APPLEFORD.

Excuse me, I wasn't idle. I was hard at work.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

You were writing very clever books, I daresay, but there wasn't a penny of money in them—not a penny! No one ever talked about them. I acted for the best.

APPLEFORD.

You nearly spoilt her life and mine.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

At any rate, you have no rival. Men amuse her, but she cannot love them.

APPLEFORD.

Neither the whirl of life, nor fresh scenes, nor new faces have mattered—to me. I couldn't forget her. And she is the one person who *really* liked my *History of Byzantine Mosaics!* I wonder whether she would see me—for a moment only—just for a moment.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

I will see. Amabel! (*goes to the door*) Amabel!

AMABEL (*within*).

Yes.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

Could you see a friend?

AMABEL.

I will come at once.

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

She is coming.

(AMABEL *enters, sees* APPLEFORD, *and steps back.*)

AMABEL.

Maurice !

MRS. LUPTON MILLES.

We have been talking, darling. . . . I thought you ought to see each other. (*She goes out.*)

AMABEL.

You . . . here ?

APPLEFORD.

Forgive me, Amabel. I had to come. I could not help coming.

AMABEL.

Why ?

APPLEFORD.

Because I wanted to see you.

AMABEL (*sentimentally*).

Has one word been left unsaid between us ? Have we not said—everything ? Have I not suffered—everything ?

APPLEFORD.

I will make no reference to the past, dear—*friend*.

AMABEL (*mortified*).

Then I am glad—truly glad to welcome you. (*Gives him her hand—withdraws it after a pause.*)

APPLEFORD (*with a sigh*).

Let us concentrate on the future. You look just as you did on that night—three years ago—when I talked about the pleasures of hope. I shouldn't talk that way now.

AMABEL (*troubled*).

Why not? It's a beautiful subject . . . very touching.

APPLEFORD.

It doesn't do to be touching! . . . But you were eighteen with a face like a song and a voice like a starry night.

AMABEL.

Oh, Maurice! I have often wondered, Maurice, what you saw in me in the old days.

APPLEFORD.

My dear, I was mad about you—raving mad. I used to walk up and down that old street in Rome half the night —gazing at your window.

AMABEL.

Let us talk about the future . . . your plans.

APPLEFORD.

First, tell me yours.

AMABEL.

Mine are somewhat indefinite.

APPLEFORD.

Curiously enough, so are mine.

AMABEL.

Something seems to call me to Russia . . . the snows, the frozen sea, the long, long, lonely roads . . .

APPLEFORD.

The plains, vast, enigmatic, everlasting . . .

AMABEL.

With not a creature in sight.

APPLEFORD.

I don't quite like the idea of your being alone on those plains. It is almost a pity that we can't arrange to go together. *Could* it be arranged?

AMABEL.

I am afraid it might give rise to comment.

APPLEFORD.

They each have a longing, a yearning for solitude.

AMABEL.

Yes.

APPLEFORD.

They start together for the uninhabited wilds! What could be more natural? Its lucidity must commend itself to every fair mind. Why then hesitate?

AMABEL.

There are not enough fair minds.

APPLEFORD.

Darling, was all your feeling for the Byzantine Mosaics? Didn't you care a rush about me?

AMABEL.

I must have time . . . I must have time. . . .

APPLEFORD.

Don't you think now that with all our pleasant store of recollections, we might get along quite comfortably from day to day? For instance, every time I take your hand (*takes it*) I am reminded of the afternoon when I held it all the way from the Vatican to the Coliseum!

AMABEL (*shocked*).

Really, Maurice!

APPLEFORD.

It is the merest reminiscence! Now, of those fair days we spent alone, not one will ever come again. (*Amabel looks disappointed.*) (*Sighs.*) Yet, why not make the plunge?

AMABEL.

What plunge?

APPLEFORD.

Why not live on our memoirs? Our imagination?

AMABEL.

I don't quite understand.

APPLEFORD.

Let me explain. For instance, let us imagine ourselves in our own home. Charming room. Velvet curtains in old rose. A few Gainsboroughs on the wall. Logs burning in the open grate. We are sitting—you and I—alone by the fire. We are perhaps a little bored.

AMABEL.

Bored? Oh, never!

APPLEFORD.

For the sake of the argument! I leave my chair and approach yours. I say, "My dearest Heart, do you remember the evenings when I used to kneel at your feet, and tell you all my thoughts, my ambitions? And how you used to listen, how your eyes used to fill with tears when I told you of my struggles: how the colour rushed into your cheeks when I told you of a little success. I am sorry this isn't the garret I promised you." And then you would say—well, I wonder what you *would* say.

AMABEL.

You know I never say much, but I think—I mean I used to think that no one in the world was (*bites her lip*) . . . was like you, Maurice.

APPLEFORD.

Well, let us suppose, then, that you make a remark to that effect. I would continue . . . . Oh! Amabel, I can't joke about it any more. I am in earnest—dead earnest. If we cannot be as we were, we must never meet again. I have

got the rose velvet curtains, and the logs in the grate, and the Gainsboroughs on the wall. I have got the two chairs. But one of them is empty. And when I sit there alone—looking at it, I think—"What has my work done for me? What is all this to me? She isn't here to care."

AMABEL.

Oh, Maurice, are you sure this isn't pity?—a noble kind of revenge? You were always Quixotic . . .

(PENNINGTON *enters and beckons mysteriously.*)

PENNINGTON.

Miss Amabel?

AMABEL.

Yes. . . .

PENNINGTON (*still beckoning*).

Miss Amabel. . . .

AMABEL (*going to her*).

What is it?

PENNINGTON.

This gentleman is waiting to see you.

AMABEL.

Ask him to wait till I ring.

PENNINGTON.

Yes, miss. (*She goes out.*)

AMABEL (*recovering herself*).

You must go. We have talked too long. You must go.

APPLEFORD.

But you are leaving London early in the morning. (*She is silent.*) You will see me once more?

AMABEL.

Good-night.

APPLEFORD (*looks at her, hesitates*).

You will see me once more?

AMABEL.

No, no! I must not! I dare not!

APPLEFORD.

You dare not!

AMABEL.

I must be consistent. I have serious thoughts of entering a convent—for life.

APPLEFORD.

But what about Russia? Let me entreat you to make no hasty decision. You will see me in the morning?

AMABEL.

It is madness . . . but . . .

APPLEFORD.

At nine?

AMABEL (*desperately*).

At nine!

APPLEFORD.

You will keep your word?

AMABEL.

I will keep my word. At nine.

APPLEFORD.

Good-night.

AMABEL (*still retains his hand*).

Good-night. Go! Go! . . .

APPLEFORD (*hesitates a moment*).

You have nothing else to say to me?

AMABEL.

Yes. I am expecting a visitor.

APPLEFORD.

At this hour?

AMABEL (*desperately*).

Yes! He is waiting to see me now. . . . Perhaps you wonder why he comes to see me.

APPLEFORD.

I ask to know only so much as you may wish to tell me.

AMABEL (*looking at him*).

He is a friend. . . .

APPLEFORD.

Do you wish me to say that I doubt you?

AMABEL.

I want you to say what you think.

APPLEFORD.

I think you are incapable of deceiving me, but you are infinitely capable of deceiving yourself.

AMABEL.

It is . . . it is St. Asaph.

APPLEFORD (*with a sigh of relief*).

St. Asaph !

AMABEL.

I cannot tell you *why* he is here.

APPLEFORD.

Perhaps you do not know.

AMABEL (*looking at him—after a pause*).

Will you wait there—in aunt's sitting-room—till he goes ?

(APPLEFORD *looks at her and goes into the next room*, AMABEL *rings the bell.* PENNINGTON *enters followed by* ST. ASAPH.)

PENNINGTON.

His Grace the Duke of St. Asaph. (*She goes out.*)

AMABEL.

So you have come.

ST. ASAPH.

At the eleventh hour I was detained. I had to do some writing. I left it because, at any cost, I am determined to offer you my advice. You are not behaving well to Appleford.

AMABEL.

My dear friend !

ST. ASAPH.

I mean what I say. There is no woman—except my wife —for whom I have a deeper affection than yourself. But you are spoiling two lives. You are sacrificing Appleford and yourself for a mere idea. You cannot doubt his devotion to you.

AMABEL.

If you could realise how I long to give in, what a struggle it is to say No, no, when my heart means Yes, yes. . . . You see, I hate myself so much.

ST. ASAPH.

Why ?

AMABEL.

He must despise me for my weakness long ago—listening to my aunts—who thought he was mercenary, and not trusting my own instincts.

ST. ASAPH.

You don't make the mistake better by playing the fool now. I *beg* your pardon, but you are so sensible in all matters except in this one great matter of your own happiness. There is no rose without a thorn, but there are

many thorns without roses! Take life from that point of view.

AMABEL.

But if I saw Maurice unhappy after our marriage—I couldn't bear it, I couldn't.

ST. ASAPH.

A man who has made a mistake in his wife can never be so wretched as a woman who has chosen the wrong husband. You know Ada Wuthering?

AMABEL.

Yes, I know her.

ST. ASAPH.

She is beautiful, young, clever. And there is no one so miserable. Why? Because discontent has made her suspicious of everything and every creature. She thinks that no woman is sincere, and no man to be trusted. The fact is that Wuthering adores her. And if the truth were known, she is very fond of Wuthering. But they wrangle from morning to night, deceive each other at every opportunity, and imagine that all others are the same. Now be honest with yourself, and see how easy it will be to believe in Appleford. Have you ever loved any one better than Maurice?

AMABEL.

Never.

ST. ASAPH.

Very well. Then give him credit for as much fidelity.

AMABEL.

But women are different.

ST. ASAPH.

Upon my word, I think men are the more constant !

AMABEL.

Do you ? . . . Rich and popular men often desire things merely because they cannot attain them. That object once gained, the charm vanishes.

ST. ASAPH.

You like Appleford, but, evidently, you have no true conception of his character. He cares for nothing in this world but you.

AMABEL.

But why are you so anxious—so eager about this ?

ST. ASAPH.

Surely now, Amabel, we can trust each other. You will alienate all your friends if you give way to these suspicious moods, and *do* forget your money. It is a good, useful thing in its way, but you make it too expensive. If I were Appleford, I would cut you straight out of my life. In fact, I have done so, already, myself. I loved you. Time didn't cure me—you cured me. You were always full of doubts and misgivings.

AMABEL.

You are very severe.

ST. ASAPH.

I am sorry, but I don't like to see a good fellow trifled with. There are not so many of them. You will believe me when I say that Appleford has never once wavered in all these years.

AMABEL.

This is torture ! My mind is divided against itself . . say no more now.

ST. ASAPH.

Ah, then there is some hope ?

AMABEL.

Who knows ? I dare not think . . . I must have time . . .

ST. ASAPH.

This is the very moment. That is why I am here. He talks of going abroad again. Once more he will leave England—his estates, his duties, his ambitions. I don't say that he is right to let his love for you so disturb his life, but *I* know some of the strongest men do wrong in just this way. Love seems to make the foolish—wise, and wise men—mad !

AMABEL.

Oh, let me think . . I feel sure that you have mistaken his friendship—our friendship—for love. We are friends —nothing more.

ST. ASAPH.

I know Appleford. He is a strange fellow. He hesitates when he doesn't know his own mind : when he knows it—

and he knows it in your case—he never rests—he cannot rest—until his point is gained. Cut-and-dry sentiments do no good at all. You cannot foist wives or tastes upon a man like Appleford.

AMABEL (*passionately*).

How I wish it could all be decided for me! Why doesn't Fate step in and take away the responsibility?

(*Voices heard outside.*)

ADA (*outside*).

I am so glad that she is better. Aren't you glad, Georgina? No, don't announce us. Let us go in.

AMABEL.

Who is that?

GEORGINA (*heard outside*).

Is this the door?

ST. ASAPH.

Good God! It is my wife! What will she think?

(GEORGINA *and* ADA *enter.*)

GEORGINA (*seeing* ST. ASAPH, *gives a cry of surprise*).

Sydney!

ADA (*looking round in triumph*).

Georgina was so anxious. I am dreadfully sorry, of course!

ST. ASAPH.

Sorry! What for?

ADA.

Well—if you can't see—in the circumstances . . .

ST. ASAPH.

What's the matter with the circumstances?

ADA.

My dear St. Asaph, I can stand a good deal—but . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Who is asking you to stand a good deal?

(AMABEL *goes across the room to the door leading into next room, opens it, and calls.*)

AMABEL.

Maurice!

(LORD APPLEFORD *enters.*)

AMABEL.

Mrs. Wuthering has kindly brought Georgina to call.

ST. ASAPH (*quietly, to* APPLEFORD).

In fact, has stolen a march upon us. Perhaps this serves us right. We wished to keep our secret a day longer.

GEORGINA (*mechanically*).

What secret?

ST. ASAPH.

I will tell you. There were once two people: both were very clever, both were very much in love, but one was very obstinate. Now, which was the obstinate one? (*Joins* AMABEL'S *and* APPLEFORD'S *hands.*) Could anybody believe that either of these delightful persons could ever have been in the wrong? (*To Appleford.*) You understand?

APPLEFORD.

Perfectly.

GEORGINA.

Sydney ! . . . Amabel ! (*She kisses her.*) I am crying . . . because . . . because I am so glad. (ST. ASAPH *goes to her and they go up together.*)

ADA.

Forgive me if I rub my eyes. It is all so astonishing ! But I congratulate you both with all my heart. (*To* AMABEL.) Then you won't take that long journey to-morrow ? (*She moves up.*)

AMABEL.

I . . . I think not. . . . Fate has decided so much that . . .

APPLEFORD.

If you are a wise woman, you will let Fate do all the rest.

AMABEL (*putting her hands in his*).

Does this prove my wisdom ?

APPLEFORD.

No, something much better !

AMABEL.

What can that be ?

APPLEFORD.

Your love !

(ST. ASAPH *and* GEORGINA *come down to opposite side of stage.*)

ST. ASAPH.

It is morning now. (*Looks at his watch*). One o'clock. My dearest, we must catch the 9.30 for St. Asaph.

GEORGINA.

Isn't there an earlier train?

ST. ASAPH.

I am afraid not.

GEORGINA.

Oh, let us be alone by ourselves . . . for the rest of the year.

ST. ASAPH.

In our own home . . .

GEORGINA.

Without one single friend . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Or relative . . .

GEORGINA.

We shall be happy . . .

ST. ASAPH.

Ever afterwards! But we are forgetting Ada!

(*He looks towards* ADA, *who stands alone in centre, looking from one couple to the other.*)

ADA.

Don't mind me! The highest order of mind is always solitary. But I love to see you happy—and I hope it will last. I said from the beginning . . .

GEORGINA.

What?

ADA.

That marriage—in some cases—was a complete success! Can I say more?

ST. ASAPH (*to* GEORGINA).

Darling!

APPLEFORD (*to* AMABEL).

Dearest!

END OF THE PLAY.

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